

CHRIST-CENTERED CATECHESIS: A TRAINING  
PROGRAM FOR FIRST-GENERATION  
VIETNAMESE CHRISTIANS

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHRIST-CENTERED CATECHESIS: A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR FIRST-GENERATION VIETNAMESE CHRISTIANS**

by

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Christ-centered Catechism is a training program for first-generation Vietnamese Christians in Ohio to learn basic theology. The main goal was for students to know more about Christ and to become more active in sharing their Christian faith. A series of five lessons in multiple-choice format were used to teach and to test the adults. Only the inputs of ten new believers were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project. The students' answers were graded automatically through SurveyMonkey, an online quantitative tool. The results of the training indicated that the theological knowledge and the faith of the learners have been strengthened after taking the course.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

A sincere thanks to several friends, especially Reverend Dr. Brooks Heck, for their help in editing the paper. A big thanks to the families of Pham Quang Khiem and Diep Bao An for their financial support. And last but not least, a heartfelt appreciation to the Vietnamese United Methodist congregations in Columbus and Dayton, Ohio, for their participation in the project. Their faith is a great motivation for me to complete this project.

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the new Vietnamese Christians in Ohio, whom the author has had the privilege to lead them to Christ, to learn from their journey of faith, and to walk with them toward Christian maturity.

## INTRODUCTION

On the third Sunday of November 2011, the Vietnamese United Methodist congregants in Dayton, Ohio were invited to give thanks to God on the occasion of Thanksgiving. A middle-age woman stood in front of the church and said, "I would like to give thanks to Buddha for the blessings that I receive recently." This Christian lady had been attending this church for about two years. She was not a Christian before she came to this church. She married a Christian, and her husband introduced her to this church. On her first visit to the church, she heard for the first time God's love through Jesus Christ and agreed to pray to profess her faith in God, and since then, she attended the church regularly. Her sharing on that Thanksgiving Sunday was totally genuine and had no intention to insult the Christian faith.

After hearing her statement, the whole congregation, including the pastor, was stunned and speechless because they did not expect to hear such sharing at a church. The pastor was surprised at first; she, however, quickly understood why that happened, and guided the church to focus back on worshipping God. She kindly reminded them that the Trinity is the only true God in the world, who welcomes people of all nations to worship and to praise.

The incident above was unique, but was not the only awkward experience that Vietnamese churches have encountered. Unlike common Caucasians, whose cultural contextmingles with Christian theology, Vietnamese people generally do not have a

good understanding of Christian beliefs, as their contextual backgrounds do not embrace Christian beliefs, activities, or resources. As a result, basic Christian concepts such as the Trinity or the life of Jesus are new to Vietnamese people.

For first-generation Vietnamese Christians who are converted after they left their homeland and now live in the United States, the assumption is that they would have better opportunities to explore Christianity. In reality, they do not have more convenient means to develop their new faith due to the language barrier and other challenges such as isolated geographical setting or limited Christian resources in their languages. Spiritually, new Vietnamese Christians are like newborns trying to survive in tough circumstances. Contextual challenges affect faith growth negatively. As a consequence, their spirituality grows slow.

As an immigrant and as a pastor of a minority ethnic church, the writer of this paper perceives and understands these difficulties. She, however, is convinced that external challenges are not the core reasons of faith inactiveness, but the immaturity of spirituality is the main cause that halts people from living out their faith actively. In other words, not knowing is an obstacle of maturity. With that perspective, she concludes that faith growth can be improved through biblical and theological studies. She is also convinced that church health depends significantly not only on what but also on how local pastors nurture their flocks.

Since the majority of the congregants where the author of this project is serving are first-generation believers, she would like to take advantage of her doctoral project to teach them theology systematically in catechesis format, concentrating on Jesus Christ,

their Savior, so that they know more concisely and firmly about who he is and what he does. From there, they shall know what to do appropriately as his believers and followers.

Thus, the main purpose of this doctoral project is to form a simple program for church leaders to systematically nurture the theological knowledge of the first-generation Christian immigrants during the first stage of their faith journey. It is the author's hope that this study will renew the faith of new believers in Christ and encourage them to become more active Christians. If the training program is effective, it will be made available through online forum for others who have similar need to use. The followings are the summary of the chapters in this dissertation.

Chapter One is about the context of the church where the author of this project serves as a pastor and her journey of faith. The goal is for readers to understand the unique backgrounds and contexts of these particular ethnic Ohioan Christians, who represent first-generation Vietnamese Christians in America. From there, readers recognize challenges in their journey to grow in faith. Also, readers will get to know the author, a Vietnamese Christian herself, and her passion to help her new Christian friends to grow in their faith in God.

Chapter Two is a literature review of some reading materials that the researcher studied extensively. The topics that she studied are the history of the Vietnamese Church, general understandings of Vietnamese in America, church renewal, Christology, and Christological catechesis. Besides the Bible, these sources of literature are the main foundations for the author to create her training material.

Chapter Three is a specific work of preparing to teach Christology based on biblical, theological, and historical foundations. The Bible, historical theologies, and

church traditions help to clarify how Christology on the person of Jesus has been formed and sustained through time. The foundations will reaffirm and convince the contemporary biblical learners of the accuracy of their Christian faith.

Chapter Four covers the methodology of the training course. It reveals the reasons of choosing the teaching method and the contents of the training course. Chapter Five describes how the course was implemented and shares the results of the training. In Chapter Six, the author summarizes the implementation, shares observations from the teaching experience, and provides final points learned from the entire project.

The last part of the dissertation is the Appendix section, which includes several forms of material used for the training course. They are the syllabus, surveys, lessons, an assignment, a final exam, evaluations, and answer keys. All of these teaching materials are prepared in both languages, English and Vietnamese.

## CHAPTER ONE

### MINISTRY FOCUS

#### Church Context

Faith is a journey, which is not the same for everyone. There are many life factors that shape faith's growth such as social background, knowledge, and experience. Amerman, wrote in her book, *Studying Congregations*, that, "No two congregations are alike".<sup>1</sup> In order to understand how faith grows and to serve the church more effectively, it is crucial for pastors to first learn about the people of the church – their backgrounds, current situations, and future goals. For that reason, this chapter will start with the church name.

#### Church Name

The Vietnamese American United Methodist Church (VAUMC) is not one, but two separate congregations in Ohio; one is in Dayton, and the other is in Columbus. Although these two congregations have never merged, they have a lot in common in terms of background, history, and context. The similarities will be revealed later in this chapter. For the purpose of this Doctor of Ministry project, the author of this paper will address these two congregations as one church, which is VAUMC.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy T. Amerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 78.

The name, Vietnamese American United Methodist Church, was originally chosen by Reverend Paul Tran, the founding pastor. It is not an official name because this congregation never became a charter church. For over two decades, VAUMC is still a mission church, supported by Capital Area North District, West Ohio Conference. The term "Vietnamese" was purposely chosen as a part of the church's name to describe the heritage of the congregation. With just that one word, it reveals a lot about who they are – their identity, struggles, and faith.

### Christian Background

#### **Disadvantages in Native Land**

Their homeland, Vietnam, has become well-known around the world since the Vietnam War, which ended over three decades ago (1975). Vietnam is still a developing country, regardless of a fact that its economy has been growing tremendously since the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to the World Factbook of Central Intelligence Agency, the GDP per capita of Vietnam in 2010 was \$3,100.<sup>2</sup> Born in a poor country, it is common that Vietnamese adults did not have opportunities for a good education.

At VAUMC, eighty percent of its members are over forty years old. Only a few of them finished high school in Vietnam. Some of them had a few years in elementary school, and few could not even read Vietnamese well. This implies that not only they did not have a good education, but also that many of them did not have opportunities to learn a foreign language like English in their home country. Without a good educational

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<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook: Vietnam," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html> (accessed September 24, 2011).

background, upon arriving to the United States, these Vietnamese adults focus on making a living to support their family rather than getting a better education for themselves; thus, their learning abilities have not improved much in America. Life becomes even harder for them to keep up with the new society due to the language barrier.

Geographically, Vietnam neighbors China, in which both countries have a long history of war. It is obvious that Vietnam had been influenced by this giant neighbor, especially by its culture and religion. Many studies claim that Buddhism reached Vietnam in the third century BCE through India and China. After many centuries, Vietnam still carries a strong Buddhist influence, even though the World Factbook's 1999 census reported that only 9.3 percent of the Vietnamese claimed themselves Buddhists.<sup>3</sup> Christianity, through the Catholic Church, came to Vietnam in the sixteenth century, while the Protestant Church only celebrated its centennial in 2011. Based on the study above, Christianity is the second largest religion in Vietnam, with 7.3 percent are Catholics and 0.5 percent are Protestants. Other religions are less than 3 percent of the population. Thus, about 80 percent of the Vietnamese population is non-religious.<sup>4</sup>

Although most Vietnamese do not identify themselves as believers of any religion, they are still very religious in their own right. They generally accept the theories of Karma and rebirth. Inside of their houses, they have a "Bàn Thờ" (worship altar) to worship the deceased relatives; outside of their houses, they build small altars called "Bàn Thiên" (God's Altar) to ask for blessings from a heavenly God. In their business stores, they have "Bàn thờ Ông Địa" (an image of a big belly man, sitting and smiling) to wish for fortunes from an earthly god. They have faith in many hand-made images, and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

often consult fortune tellers. Reimer summarizes Vietnamese ambiguous beliefs as follows, "belief in geomancy, numerology, astrology, soothsayers, sorcerers, and in deifying local or national heroes."<sup>5</sup>

Most Vietnamese seem religious, yet they do not have solid foundations of their beliefs or intentionally reassert the authentication of their beliefs. Often they do not require historical or tangible evidences to support their beliefs. In short, their beliefs are merely based on family's traditions or personal perspectives. Many of them assume Buddhism is their religion, even though they have never personally learned about the religion or associated with any Buddhist organization for regular spiritual discipline.

Vietnamese people are not serious about religion, yet are quite closed-minded toward religions. They are sensitive about faith and prefer not to discuss religion. Their religious philosophy is "đạo ai nấy giữ", which literally means "whoever's religion, that person keeps", or implicitly "leave my beliefs alone". Common religious views of this ethnical group suggest that they do not have serious concerns about eternal life. They have a common assumption that as long as they feel alright about their current moral lives, they would be fine with any judgment after death.

While Buddhism is naturally accepted, Christianity is commonly viewed as a cultural and political concern. In the minds of older generations, Christianity is a western religion, and so they have no interests in learning a new religion spread by western foreigners, whom they hastily view as political invaders. In general, they find Christians' beliefs offensive, because Christian teachings appear to oppose their common traditions such as worshipping hand-made idols, ancestors, or the deceased.

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<sup>5</sup> Reg Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011), 13.

On the other hand, the Communist government always watches the church's activities carefully. To them, religion is a danger to society and a threat to their regime. As a result, churches do not have permission to spread their faith directly or indirectly through media or books. In the recent years, the situation has become a little better, probably due to international reactions and influences; however, freedom of religion is still very far from reality.

Studies find that until the end of Vietnam War in 1975, there are only about 160,000 evangelical Christians in Vietnam.<sup>6</sup> Based on the population at the time, which is 46.5 million,<sup>7</sup> the population of evangelical Christians was about 0.03%. Today it has increased to 0.5%, which is still a small number. Hence, it is not a surprise to see that among the members of VAUMC, only 15% of them were Christians before they came to the United States.

In summary, coming from their cultural background, the people of the VAUMC already have some disadvantages in their faith journey. They do not have a solid educational experience, a strong Christian background, or a large Christian community to grow their church.

### **Circumstances of Becoming First-generation Christians**

To understand how some Vietnamese Americans become Christians, it is appropriate to understand how they arrive to America, for their immigrant journeys have great connections to their conversions. According to the U.S. Immigration and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Lahmeyer, "Population Statistics," <http://www.populstat.info/Asia/vietnamc.htm> (accessed December 6, 2011).

Naturalization report, there were only 650 people of Vietnamese origin living in America before 1975.<sup>8</sup> This figure changes dramatically after the end of Vietnam War in April 1975. Vietnamese, including the members of VAUMC, reside permanently in the United States because of different reasons. The following paragraphs describe concisely their diaspora. Their immigrations in some levels relate to politics.

The first influx of Vietnamese refugees, of about 150,000 people, left their homeland hurriedly in the very last days of the Vietnam War through aircrafts or ships to escape the Communist regime.<sup>9</sup> Most of them were soldiers of the South, or professionals, who worked for the U.S. government. Regardless of their political references or personal requests, most of them were approved to come to America. Upon their arrival, through the Indochinese Assistance and Refugee Assistance Act, four refugee camps were established at Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania to assist new comers.<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter, churches, non-profit organizations, and private citizens sponsored Vietnamese refugees to settle a new life in their towns. Many first Vietnamese became familiar with Christianity through their sponsors' faith, and some of them became Christians.

In the following decade, approximately 600,000 Vietnamese fled their country by boat to seek freedom from political oppression and poor economy.<sup>11</sup> They were known as

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<sup>8</sup> Christian Phan, *Vietnamese Americans: Understanding Vietnamese People in the United States 1975-2010* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity*, 85.

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Crump, *Contextualization of the Public Worship Practices of Vietnamese Protestant Churches in the Greater Ohio Valley Region* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2010), 52-53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

“the boat people”. Many of them never reached a new soil because they were robbed, raped, and murdered by Thai pirates if not lost by severe conditions on the sea. The survivors temporarily resided in the refugee camps of a Southeast country, such as the Philippines, Hong Kong, Malaysia, or Thailand, before receiving approvals to live in a third country such as the United States, Australia, or Canada permanently. While waiting at refugee camps, they attended religious gatherings; some of them accepted the faith of Christianity and maintained their faithfulness in their new countries.

In the 1990s, another group of Vietnamese, approximately 25,000 young adults, plus about another 50,000 of their relatives, came to America legally through an approval of the U.S. Congress. They are called Amerasians, or children of American soldiers and Vietnamese mothers.<sup>12</sup> In the same period of time, Congress also approved for Vietnamese military officials, who were held in re-education camps by the communist regime three years or more to come to the U.S. legally through Humanitarian Operation. Because these two groups of immigrants had no relatives in the United States, they received assistance from religious communities, government agencies, or non-profit organizations to know how to start their new lives in America. Through their sponsors, they had opportunities to understand the Christian faith.

After obtaining legal documentations or becoming U.S. citizens, many Vietnamese sponsored their immediate family members to come to the United States through the Orderly Departure Program. This is the most common way that hundreds of thousands Vietnamese now live in the United States.

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<sup>12</sup> Shandon Phan, "Vietnamese Amerasians in American," Asian Nation, <http://www.asian-nation.org/amerasians.shtml> (accessed September 24, 2011).

In recent years, the diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the United States has improved significantly. As a result, single Vietnamese and even non-Vietnamese get married in Vietnam and sponsor their spouses to the United States. The number of Vietnamese international students and workers who came to the United States for better future also increased rapidly.<sup>13</sup> As of 2012, the estimated number is over 15,000.<sup>14</sup> Many of them do not have plans to return to Vietnam. They seek legal immigration through employment or marriage in order to live in the U.S. permanently.

The last two groups of Vietnamese, who receive assistance from families or schools to become familiar with the new country, might not have immediate opportunities to explore Christian faith, but they gradually know more about Christianity through American culture, tradition, and community. For those who are interested in Christian faith or need social interactions, they attend churches and convert to Christianity.

All of the adults at the VAUMC came to the United States after the Vietnam War. Among them, only fifteen percent were Christians before they left Vietnam; the rest came to know God after leaving their homeland with reasons mentioned above. Thus, the majority of the VAUMC members are first-generation Christians. They did not have church experience or Christian knowledge prior their conversions. Being a Vietnamese Christian in America is not a simple journey to succeed. The following section explains this perspective.

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<sup>13</sup> "General report on the migration of Vietnamese citizens overseas," June 2011, [http://www.iom.int.vn/joomla/files/Events/II.3.1.%20Overview%20of%20VN%20MP%20by%20CD-MOFA%20\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.iom.int.vn/joomla/files/Events/II.3.1.%20Overview%20of%20VN%20MP%20by%20CD-MOFA%20_ENG.pdf) (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Project Atlas, "International Students in the United States," <http://www.iie.org/en/Services/Project-Atlas/United-States/International-Students-In-US> (accessed September 3, 2013).

## Disadvantages in America

After almost forty years since the first influx of Vietnamese immigrants, the population of the Vietnamese ethnic group in the United States has exceeded more than 1.5 million.<sup>15</sup> Studies show that a high percentage of first-generation Vietnamese Americans (87.5 %) do not speak English, and they prefer to live in metropolitan areas.<sup>16</sup> Language barriers, unaccustomed climate, and ethnic bond are the main reasons that brought them together. At these urban locations, the Vietnamese Americans live conveniently despite of the language limitation, because from public communicational means such as newspapers or television programs, to social services such as health care or legal assistance, they all function in Vietnamese.

The life of Vietnamese Americans who scatter in the areas with low Vietnamese population such as Ohio is more challenging. They choose to live in these unpopular areas mainly because it is where they first resided and their lives have been settled. Economically, they might be content, but psychologically, the language barrier made their social and cultural lives more isolate. They do not have a healthy connection with surrounding communities, including their ethnic group. Similarly, churches in these remote areas do not have close fellowship with other churches of the same ethnic group. This is seen as a disadvantage of faith growth for Vietnamese speakers.

Adding to the disadvantages mentioned above, the Vietnamese Christian community in America is low in population. As a result, they do not have a strong source of personnel to produce numerous Christian resources in their own language such as

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<sup>15</sup> "The Vietnamese Population in the United States: 2010." [http://www.bpsos.org/mainsite/images/DelawareValley/community\\_profile/us.census.2010.the%20vietnamese%20population\\_july%202011.pdf](http://www.bpsos.org/mainsite/images/DelawareValley/community_profile/us.census.2010.the%20vietnamese%20population_july%202011.pdf) (accessed July 13, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

books or media products. Therefore, it becomes harder for first-generation Vietnamese Christians to be spiritually nurtured on their own through faith-based materials when needed.

Since they are spiritually too new in their faith, first-generation Vietnamese Christians do not see the importance of their relationship with God; therefore, they do not actively make great efforts to seek faith maturity. The transition from a poor and government-controlled country to a modern and free country made Vietnamese Americans, including Vietnamese Christians, become more focused on economical prosperity. Despite their English incompetence, they work hard and save their income. The data of 2010 Census reports only 13.8 percent of Vietnamese are below the poverty limit.<sup>17</sup>

Vietnamese parents commonly view education is a key to financial and social success; therefore, they focus on supporting their children financially, so their children can successfully complete higher education or professional degrees. Based on the statistics from 1990, almost half of young Vietnamese attended college, while white and black students were 39.5% and 28.1%, respectively.<sup>18</sup> This information is not recent, but it still reflects relevantly Vietnamese perspective toward education. The educational view of the Vietnamese is considered positive for their children; however, it takes their concentration away from spirituality.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Carl L. Bankston III, "Vietnamese American: Countries and Their Cultures," [www.everyculture.com/multi/Sr-Z/Vietnamese-Americans.html](http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Sr-Z/Vietnamese-Americans.html) (accessed September 24, 2011).

Culturally, Vietnamese Americans are very reserved, which is also considered a disadvantage for faith growth. Phan summarized the characteristics of the first-generation Vietnamese American as the followings:

- Think too much about the past, especially the Vietnam War.
- Use Vietnamese language.
- Lack English language proficiency.
- Practice Vietnamese culture and hold conservative cultural perceptions.
- Withdraw and isolate themselves from the U.S. mainstream.
- Work hard and send money to support relatives in Vietnam.
- Encourage their children and grandchildren to learn the Vietnamese language.
- Support anti-communist organizations.<sup>19</sup>

With all of the contextual disadvantages and cultural characteristics mentioned above, it is logical to see that it is very difficult for first-generation Vietnamese Christians to become faithful and active if they were walking the faith journey alone. Associating with a local church to worship God in their own language is therefore necessary and crucial for them to sustain and to grow in their faith. For that reason, more Vietnamese churches gradually formed and continue to exist.

As of 2010, approximately 300 Vietnamese churches have been established across America.<sup>20</sup> VAUMC is one of the only two active Vietnamese churches in Ohio. The

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<sup>19</sup> Phan, *Vietnamese Americans: Understanding Vietnamese People in the United States 1975-2010*, 97.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 46.

other church is in Akron, over two hours of driving distance from Columbus.<sup>21</sup> With a total of less than 200 Vietnamese Protestant Christians across the state, Ohioan Vietnamese Christians are about 0.025 percent of the Vietnamese population (20,000) in the entire state.<sup>22</sup>

#### The Vietnamese American United Methodist Church in Ohio

In 1988, the Bishop of the West Ohio Conference appointed Reverend Paul Thongsouk Tran from France to serve a Laotian United Methodist congregation in Columbus. Tran was born in Vietnam; his father was a Vietnamese and his mother was a Laotian. Tran found out that there were a few thousand of Vietnamese who were living in the same area, and some of them were Christians. Cooperating with these Christians, he started a Bible study group, and in September 1989, they officially started a new ministry for the Vietnamese with an approval and support of the West Ohio Conference. A few years later, Tran formed another Vietnamese ministry in the Dayton area, where the same amount of Vietnamese population resided.<sup>23</sup> He became their pastor until he moved to Virginia in July 2008 to serve another Vietnamese United Methodist church.

During Reverend Tran's leadership, both congregations had weekly worship services; one was in the morning and the other was in the afternoon. Due to different reasons, they had relocated a few times. Currently, the congregations use the facilities at

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<sup>21</sup> Spiritual Light Ministries, "Lich Su Hoi Thanh Tin Lanh Akron, Ohio," <http://www.denlinh.com/index.php?do=news&act=detail&id=27> (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Office of the Governor State of Ohio, "A Report on the Status of Ohio's Asian American Pacific Islander Community," submitted on December 28, 2010, [http://www.asiainc-ohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/AAPI\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.asiainc-ohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/AAPI_Report_Final.pdf) (accessed September 24, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Paul Thongsouk Tran, *A New Paradigm for Women Leaders in Vietnamese Congregations in the Twenty-first Century* (Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary, 2007), 1-4.

South Park United Methodist Church in Dayton and at Peace United Methodist Church in Columbus.

VAUMC's members have no great concerns when they need to move. They do not have many possessions except a few things such as a Holy Communion set, a musical keyboard, and a portable sound system. Since their formation, they annually receive financial assistance from the Capital Area North District to provide a salary package for their pastor.

In November 2008, after a few months without a pastor, Capital Area North District appointed Reverend Esther Dang to be their new pastor. She kept her full-time job as a computer engineer, because she was appointed to serve VAUMC at both locations with a part-time salary. By the time Dang accepted this position, the situation at VAUMC could be described briefly as follows.

The attendance was less than twenty-five. Twenty percent were teenagers and children, who did not speak or understand Vietnamese well. All of the adults were over thirty-five years old and spoke mainly Vietnamese. None of them obtained a college degree. The adults usually worked six days per week. Ninety percent of them had family's members who were not Christians. Most of them never traveled out of Ohio. VAUMC was the only church that they associated since they came to the United States. The congregation contributed \$9,600 per year to support their pastor's salary package.

### **The Researcher**

By the time Esther began her Doctor of Ministry program, she had been ministering only a few years. VAUMC was her first and only appointment thus far.

Compared with life experience and the faith journey of the people at VAUMC, Esther had some significant similarities as well as differences. One of the main similarities was that Esther was also originally from Vietnam and grew up in poverty. She was raised in a rural village in the South, where there were no paved roads, electric power, or fountain water. It was common that the villagers did not have bicycles or shoes. Esther shared such experiences with them. However, unlike many children at her village, she went to high school, but did not have a chance to learn English before she came to the United States.

Esther is the youngest of her eleven siblings. Different from the people at VAUMC, Esther was not a first-generation Christian. Her father, Khoa Dang, had been a pastor many years before she was born. Thus, all her life, Esther grew up in the church. Since childhood, Esther was taught to keep basic Christian practices such as reading the Bible, praying daily, and going to church weekly. As a daughter of a pastor, she also had more opportunities to explore the Christian faith on her own through her father's reading resources. She became familiar with the church's beliefs and ministries more than a typical Vietnamese Christian.

Like many Christians, Esther's journey of faith started slowly. Not like her parents and siblings, who were very active in serving God, Esther did not have strong interests in doing church ministry as a youth. On the contrary, she felt spiritually dry and intentionally isolated herself from the life of the church. On the outside, she maintained a normal Christian lifestyle by keeping basic Christian practices; yet deep down inside, she did not have a personal relationship with God. She felt she was struggling spiritually but avoided to seek for answers or help.

Right after high school graduation, Esther's personal life had a great turning point. In September 1989, her family came to America through the sponsorship from her three older brothers, who left their homeland in the very last days of the Vietnam War. Like many young Vietnamese, Esther was excited about the opportunity of living in the United States. She dreamed of obtaining a professional degree in order to be successful in life. At the time, having a professional job was considered the most fulfilling dream that she would ever want. She started to pursue this dream by putting all of her effort and time into college. She tried every possible way to learn English, a language that she did not have opportunities to learn in her native land. Focusing on her own goal, Esther did not know that God had a better plan for her.

In her first years living in the United States, Esther maintained faithful church attendance even though she no longer lived with her parents. During this period of time, she had no intentions to resolve her inner struggle, but mysteriously God brought her closer to the Word of God through regular worship services. She no longer avoided hearing sermons and started finding the Bible very alive and powerful for her soul. Gradually, she sought to learn the Bible more and more on her own, for she did not think she had enough of it through regular programs of a local church. Her spiritual life was being transformed tremendously. She felt joy and loved to spend time for devotion. To her, it was the most powerful experience of spirituality that she has ever had, and she considered it her real time of conversion.

As she gradually recognized God's grace upon her, she realized how blessed she was to be born in a Christian family and felt God's call in doing ministry, specifically for the Vietnamese. In her eyes, many Vietnamese have been living in the spiritual darkness.

There were not many people who wanted to tell them how to be freed through the blood of Jesus Christ. Esther believed it was God's plan for her to become a spiritual leader to expand the church among the Vietnamese. With that perspective, she determined to prepare herself to become an ordained clergy in order to lead the contemporary and future generations to serve God appropriately and effectively.

Since then, her goal in life was no longer to have a professional career but to do church ministries among her native people. Esther focused on her studies with a new attitude for she wanted to finish college as soon as possible. After five years of studying, she completed her bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of California, San Diego in June 1996.

During those college years, Esther had decided that her next goal was to enter seminary right after college. This was viewed as an unusual plan for an Asian female like her, yet she did not hesitate to pursue it. Advised by a brother, who was a pastor of the United Methodist Church, she applied to study in Master of Divinity program at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington D.C., and she was accepted. She moved to the East Coast in the fall of 1996.

Esther decided to study far away from her family because she felt a need to be engaged in a new culture to gain new life experiences and knowledge, especially in learning English. During seminary years, Esther often thought about the next stage in her life. She wanted to be helpful to others spiritually, but she could not determine a specific professional role she wanted to do. Her personal background, culture, and characteristics seemed to shy her away from a pastoral role, even though deep down inside, she knew it was what she was called to be.

When she planned to be ordained by the United Methodist Church, she decided to pursue the Deacon Track because she felt it was the most suitable direction for her at the time. She had some reasons for not choosing the Elder Track. Growing up as a child of a pastor, as well as having several family members as pastors, she understood how hard it was to minister a church. Besides, her native community was still not accustomed to having females as church leaders, especially in the ministerial role. Moreover, she considered herself an introvert and ineloquent in speech and writing. With such reasons, she wanted to avoid public attention as much as possible.

Esther wanted to get more seminary education to serve God in a position such as a Bible professor, a counselor, or a missionary; therefore, before graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in May 1999, she applied to the Master of Theology program at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. By God's grace, she completed the second master program in one year and graduated in May 2000.

Esther then moved back to Orange County, California, to be near to relatives and the largest Vietnamese community in America. She hoped to serve the church and to make income to pay off some loans. However, unable to find any church-related job, she worked as a software engineer, a career that she studied in undergraduate, for a living. During this time, she actively involved herself with a local church and kept her eye open for opportunities to serve God on a bigger scale.

In the following year, God blessed her personal life. Her fiancé Nghia Trung Bui, who she had known since high school, came to the United States to be with her through her sponsorship. (His father and her father used to be pastors in the same province in Vietnam.) They got married, and soon their first daughter Kristie Dang Bui was born.

Esther was very thankful and happy with God's blessings on her life. However, deep down in her mind, she did not feel completely satisfied with her church involvement. For that reason, she kept searching for more opportunities to serve God.

An opportunity came in 2002. The Union College of California (UCC), now Union University of California, a popular Vietnamese Bible School among the Vietnamese churches, located in the same county, invited her to teach a Bible course for a Bachelor of Arts program. She happily accepted it although it was a non-paid position. For her, the dream of serving the Vietnamese church had become true. Shortly after, UCC started online courses for Vietnamese students around the world, including Vietnam. Esther was overjoyed with the new program. In her mind, she believed God's call for her to serve the people of her native land had actually happened. For through UCC, she was able to participate in doing ministry among the Vietnamese while not physically being there.

In 2003, in order to be officially accepted as a spiritual leader among her native community, Esther applied to become an ordained Deacon through the United Methodist Church. Her wish, however, was not recommended by the Cal-Pacific Conference for ordination. Esther felt a bit disappointed, but she was not discouraged by the decision. She believed that it was God's will. She trusted that God was in control.

A couple of years later, Esther and her husband had a second daughter, Jeslyn Dang Bui. She then applied for ordination again, but this time, she wanted to pursue the Elder Track to become a pastor. There were two main reasons that she came to this new decision. First, she had seen church leaders, especially pastors, make many mistakes in doing ministry. She often saw that new believers did not grow in their faith or even left

the church because of the pastor's faults. The ineffectiveness of the church leadership, however, did not discourage Esther to pursue ordination. On the contrary, she had a stronger desire to become a pastor, for she hoped to make a positive impact on the church.

The second reason that Esther would like to become an Elder pastor related to the great need in leadership among the Vietnamese Church worldwide. Whether in the United States, Vietnam, or other countries, Vietnamese churches have always been in need of pastors. Esther hoped to become a pastor so she could help train the younger generation to serve God more effectively.

Yet again her desire of becoming an ordained Elder did not get a full support from the Cal-Pacific Ordination Committee. Esther accepted it peacefully and still believed that God was in control. She continued to serve God actively as a church member and a Bible teacher for UCC. However, in the following years, she did not reapply for ordination because she did not know how to approach it differently when her personal life had no significant changes.

As she continued to pray and to seek for more opportunities to serve God, God answered her prayer. In December of 2006, knowing that the Orange County Jail needed more volunteer chaplains for the Vietnamese inmates, Esther applied and was accepted. Once a week, she accompanied another female chaplain to conduct a Bible study class for Vietnamese inmates. She felt very content with the new ministry and thought she would do this for life. For her, to be able to share God's love and salvation directly to others, especially the Vietnamese, was an experience that she felt very meaningful and fulfilling.

Esther was content that she was doing Jesus' great commission, but she did not realize that God had more plans for her.

In 2007, a Vietnamese United Methodist Church in Virginia was seeking a pastor. Encouraged by her extended family, she accepted the church's invitation for an interview. She had high hopes that she would be appointed to serve her first ministerial appointment at this church, because it was where she had her first seminarian internship a decade before. She felt ready to give up her professional career to move to the East Coast again to do ministry full-time, but the congregation there was not willing to have her as their pastor. It was possible that she was still relatively young, did not have pastoral experience, and her gender was not considered an advantage in a ministerial position.

Coming from the same cultural background, Esther understood the decision of this church. However, she wondered if she would ever have an opportunity to serve a Vietnamese church as a pastor. She was passionate about serving Vietnamese churches because she cared for them. She knew they needed help, and she believed she could be helpful. However, she did not know how to be accepted as a spiritual leader by her native community. She continued to ask for God's guidance through prayers.

A year later, in the spring of 2008, another request for a pastor emerged in Ohio. Reverend Paul Tran, the pastor of two Vietnamese congregations there had decided to move to Virginia. He took the offer from the same congregation where a year earlier Esther had pursued. Esther waited to see if any Vietnamese pastors wanted to apply to serve the churches in Ohio, but no one seemed interested. Esther prayed to God for guidance and again decided to explore this opportunity. She was not hesitant about

visiting an unfamiliar and unpopular location, because in her mind, being able to help others growing in their faith was too precious for her to miss.

She came to visit Ohio churches with her husband in July, 2008. They discovered that the sizes of the churches were surprisingly small. Esther did not feel discouraged; on the contrary, she saw it as an opportunity for church growth. She talked with her husband, and they decided to take the position offered by the Capital Area North District, West Ohio Conference. They sold the barber shop that they owned, rented out their house in Orange County, California; and with their two little children, they moved to Columbus, Ohio a few months later.

Trusting in God's grace and strength, Esther began her first appointment with the VAUMC in November of 2008. She reminded herself of the Bible verse in Psalm 25:12 (New International Version [NIV]), "Who, then, are those who fear the LORD? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose."<sup>24</sup> She trusted that if she sought for God's guidance and followed God's lead, God would help her to build the church productively regardless of the location, circumstance, or ability.

Indeed, God was always faithful to those who trusted in God. God blessed Esther's ministry more than she could imagine. Serving VAUMC brought Esther the feeling of satisfaction that she had been searching for years. She felt ready to pursue ordination again. With a help and an encouragement from her mentor, Reverend Rae Lynn Schleif, she applied to be ordained as Probationary Elder with the United Methodist Church through the West Ohio Conference. God confirmed her ministry through the approval of the Ordination Committee. In June 2010, she was ordained as Probationary Elder by Bishop Bruce Ough.

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<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from the New International Version.

## Conclusion

After two decades, VAUMC has not grown substantially in numbers. The current pastor believes that there are multiple factors that negatively affect the faith growth of this congregation. Some of the major reasons have been pointed out previously - lack of educational experience, weak Christian influence from their original society, vague understanding of Christian theology, limited learning resources, language barrier, cultural difference, and isolated environment. Thus, to most of the Vietnamese, including the people of VAUMC, Christianity is an unfamiliar religion. Spiritually, first-generation believers are like inexperienced immigrants in a new land, where they have no knowledge of its beliefs and traditions. They have many areas to learn about their new heavenly home, especially the object of their worship, God.

As a Vietnamese like them, the researcher understands their culture background, current context, and spiritual needs. She thinks that the spiritual growth of the church, especially small ethnic churches, depends heavily on the leadership style of the local pastor. Without recognizing the spiritual weakness of the people and knowing how to nurture them properly, the church may never grow in faith as well as in quantity. With those considerations, the researcher enrolled in a doctoral program to get more academic training from a seminary. She would like to become a more effective church leader to help her local church grow spiritually as well as to prepare herself for further church services.

To help first-generation Christians at VAUMC to renew and to strengthen their faith in God systematically, the researcher plans to design an introductory, theological,

and intercultural training material in catechism to teach them. The targeted students are those who have basic education and Christian knowledge. The primary goal is for these new believers to have a better understanding of God, especially Jesus Christ, and know how to live out their faith appropriately according to the Scripture.

In addition, the researcher is also hopeful that the training material will be a useful tool for other new believers or churches that have similar contexts and needs to learn Christian theological doctrines quickly and effectively. The challenges and needs of first-generation churches everywhere are the same - they are new and inexperienced in their faith; they also lack ministerial resources. It is expected that this material will be modified and developed to suit other settings.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **STATE OF THE ART IN THE MINISTRY**

In order to find effectiveness in the training for the Vietnamese new Christians, the researcher studied five areas of literature. The first area of research is about the Vietnamese traditional church in order to understand its original faith, theology, and tradition. The second area of study is about Vietnamese people, their culture, and religion, in order to have a better understanding of the background of the context associates. The third area of literature is about church renewal. The fourth area of reading is on Christology. The last area of reading resources is on Christological catechism, to learn ways and contents to form questions.

#### **The History of the Vietnamese Church**

*Bước Đầu Tìm Hiểu Đạo Tin Lành Trên Thế Giới và ở Việt Nam*<sup>25</sup> (An Introduction of Understanding Protestantism in the World and in Vietnam) is a research book, written by a non-Christian Vietnamese writer Xuan Thanh Nguyen. This is one of a few books on the subject of Christianity, published by the Department of Religion in Vietnam after Vietnam War. The author first shares about the history, theology and major denominations of the Protestant Church in America. In the section about the Protestant

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<sup>25</sup> Xuan Thanh Nguyen, *Bước Đầu Tìm Hiểu Đạo Tin Lành Trên Thế Giới và ở Việt Nam* (Ha Noi, Vietnam: Nhà Xuất Bản Tôn Giáo, 2002).

Church in Vietnam, the author provides good information about the history, legalized denominations, and major events of Vietnamese evangelical churches. This book is a good resource for any Vietnamese who would like to know about Evangelical belief and hierarchy in Vietnam today.

*A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (1911-1965)*<sup>26</sup> is a doctoral dissertation of Phu Hoang Le, who was one of the pioneer Vietnamese pastors. He was also one of a few Vietnamese Christians who ever completed a Doctor of Philosophy in religion. As an insider, Le provides in detail historical events of the Vietnam Church in its first half century. Le's work is informative and probably the most valuable resource about the emerging of the Vietnamese Protestant Church for future generations to know and to treasure.

*41 Năm Hành Viết Chúa với Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam 1920-1961*<sup>27</sup> (Forty-one Years Serving God with the Vietnamese Evangelical Church, 1920-1961) is written by one of the first missionaries in Vietnam, Reverend I. R. Stebbins of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. His book described the history of the Vietnam Church in the first half of the century, but was not published in English. Spiritual Light Magazine published this book locally in 2004 in Vietnamese. The book was written as a personal journal to reflect the author's missionary works as well as the works of his fellow missionaries in Vietnam, including his wife. The last chapter was written by his son, Thomas H. Stebbins, who was born in Vietnam and himself became a missionary in this country until he was forced to leave Vietnam in the last days of the war. The son shared

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<sup>26</sup> Phu Hoang Le, *A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (1911-1965)* (Doctoral Dissertation) (New York, NY: New York University, 1972).

<sup>27</sup> I. R. Stebbins, *41 Năm Hành Viết Chúa với Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam 1920-1961* (Akron, OH: Spiritual Light Magazine, 2004).

shortly how his parents passed away peacefully and received great respect from their colleagues and the Vietnamese Church.

*My Vietnam: Stories of the War Years from the Inside Out*<sup>28</sup> is a very interesting memoir written by a female American missionary. Charlotte Stemple shared her and her husband's personal experiences as missionaries in the third quarter of the twentieth century in Vietnam. Through her book, readers can know the great challenges foreign evangelical missionaries in Vietnam faced daily during war time. They can also know more about Vietnamese culture and understand how the Vietnam Church sustained and grew despite difficulties and oppositions.

*Bốn Mươi Sáu Năm Trong Chức Vụ*<sup>29</sup> (*Forty-Six Years in Ministry*) is the memoir of the Reverend Thai Van Le, who was the President of the Vietnamese Evangelical Church from 1942-1960. The book describes how the church in Vietnam, by the grace of God, had growth during the difficult time of the World War II, the Vietnam-French War and the Vietnam War. The book also explains how the Vietnamese church faced the challenges and overcame oppressions from the Nguyen's Dynasty, French, Japanese and communist governments.

*Dâng Trọn Cuộc Đời: Hồi Ký 55 Năm Phục Vụ Chúa của Mục Sư Phạm Văn Năm*<sup>30</sup> (*Offering the Whole Life: The Memoir of 55 Years of Serving God of Reverend Pham Van Nam*) was written by Reverend Pham and his wife. They shared their experiences of doing ministry from the first days to the end of Pham's life. Through their

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<sup>28</sup> Charlotte Stemple, *My Vietnam: Stories of the War Years from the Inside Out* (Xulon Press, 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Thai Van Le, *Bốn Mươi Sáu Năm Trong Chức Vụ* (Sai Gon, Vietnam: Nhà Xuất Bản Tin Lành, 1970).

<sup>30</sup> Nam Van Pham, *Dâng Trọn Cuộc Đời: Hồi Ký 55 Năm Phục Vụ Chúa của Mục Sư Phạm Văn Năm* (CA, 1995).

book, readers have a better understanding of challenges that Vietnamese pastors encountered during war time in Vietnam as well as in a new country, the United States.

*Những Tháng Năm Theo Chúa: Hồi Ký Mục Sư Đặng Đặng Khoa*<sup>31</sup> (The Days Following God: A Memoir of Reverend Dang Dang Khoa) was edited and published by Reverend Dang's family in Vietnamese in 2010. Dang was one of the Vietnamese ordained pastors in the second half of the twentieth century. He had served God as a pastor for about four decades. In one part of his bibliography, Dang shares his experience as a seminarian in Vietnam at the Da Nang Bible School and the Nha Trang Theological and Bible Institute, where most of the Vietnamese pastors were trained before the end of Vietnam War. The main part of the book describes his experience working with church members to strengthen local churches. Dang's writing helps readers to know from a student's perspective how Vietnamese church leadership had been trained. His sharing helps readers to see how Vietnamese evangelical theology has been shaped.

Reg Reimer was a missionary in Vietnam during the last decade of the Vietnam War. He published his book, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity*,<sup>32</sup> in 2011, when the Vietnamese Church was celebrating the centennial of Protestantism. His book focuses on telling the story of the Vietnam Church since the Gospel reached Vietnam to its expansion worldwide among the Vietnamese community after a century. The story of the Vietnam Church interweaved with the context and the author's own experience and knowledge bring insightful perspective and valuable information regarding the Vietnam church from the beginning to the most current news. Reimer's

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<sup>31</sup> Philip Dang, *Những Tháng Năm Theo Chúa: Hồi Ký Mục Sư Đặng Đặng Khoa* (San Diego, CA: The Centennial Edition, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Reg Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011).

book expresses both knowledge and inspiration on how the Vietnamese church encountered great challenges, yet overcame them, and reaped impressive results. The author stated that his book was a way to raise a voice for Vietnamese Christians, who have been persecuted by the Communist regime. The book is a great resource for any reader who would like to understand the origin and the life of the Vietnam Church as well as the culture and characteristics of the contemporary Vietnamese.

### **The Vietnamese Ethnicity**

*Between Two Cultures: the Vietnamese in America*<sup>33</sup> by Alan B. Henkin and Liem Thanh Nguyen is one of the very first studies to understand a new ethnic Vietnamese community, in the United States. The authors make concise descriptions on the historical, cultural, and social background of the new Vietnamese immigrants, and share their contrastive analysis. They also share possible challenges to their readers to prepare them know how to work effectively with this new ethnic group.

Paul James Rutledge in early 1990 researched on the same topic. His book, *The Vietnamese Experience in America*<sup>34</sup> covers in more detail about the Vietnamese community that at the time had became a more recognizable ethnic group. Rutledge helps readers to have a general understanding of Vietnamese background, characteristics, and lifestyles.

Christian Phan is one of the most recent writers who study the Vietnamese in the United States. Phan described himself a 1.5Gen Vietnamese American. He named his

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<sup>33</sup> Alan B. Henkin and Liem Thanh Nguyen, *Between Two Cultures: the Vietnamese in America* (Saratoga, CA: Century Twenty One Pub., 1981).

<sup>34</sup> Paul James Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992).

book *Vietnamese Americans: Understanding Vietnamese People in the United States 1975-2010*.<sup>35</sup> This book explains why and how the Vietnamese started the influx of immigration to the United States since the end of the Vietnam War in April of 1975. It reveals their common struggles with the new culture and language, as well as the internal struggles within their own community; that was the cultural differences between the first generation Vietnamese and their own descendants. Some chapters in the book reflect on some achievements of the Vietnamese Americans after three decades.

Dennis G. Crump wrote *Contextualization of the Public Worship Practices of Vietnamese Protestant Churches in the Greater Ohio Valley Region*<sup>36</sup> as his Doctor of Missiology dissertation in 2010. After introducing his project, Crump shares briefly his general studies about the Vietnamese in the United States such as its history, culture, and religion. The next part of his project, he describes in detail the worship services of several churches in Ohio Valley region that he had visited. Among these churches is the VAUMC that in his dissertation Crump refers to as the Vietnamese United Methodist Churches of Ohio. He writes sixty pages about this congregation. At the end, he reveals his analysis regarding all of the worship services that he has visited, shares conclusions, and provides recommendations for further study. Crump's work is probably the most extensive published study regarding the VAUMC's worship style.

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<sup>35</sup> Christian Phan, *Vietnamese Americans: Understanding Vietnamese People in the United States 1975-2010* (Longwood, FL: Xulong Press, 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Dennis G. Crump, *Contextualization of the Public Worship Practices of Vietnamese Protestant Churches in the Greater Ohio Valley Region* (Doctoral Dissertation) (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest, 2011).

## Church Renewal

*Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal*<sup>37</sup> by Jason E. Vickers, is a new theological resource for church renewal. Vickers starts the book by concisely listing some appealing issues as well as positive achievements of the Christian Church in the present time. His suggestion for the church renewal is not finding ways to resolve contemporary issues but restudying the crucial foundations of the church, that are the nature, the mission, and the sacramental life of the church, in the light of the Holy Spirit. In each chapter, Vickers brightly defines the aspects mentioned and provides specific suggestions for churches to pursue. He emphasizes the Holy Spirit, whom he believes is the only source that can renew the church.

*What is a Healthy Church?*<sup>38</sup> is a small book written by Mark Dever. Dever defines nine marks of building healthy churches. They are expositional preacher, biblical theology, biblical understanding of the Gospel, biblical understanding of conversion, biblical understanding of evangelism, biblical church membership, biblical church discipline, biblical discipleship, and biblical church leadership. The author believes that a church should pursue all things mentioned in order to become a healthy church.

*The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission*<sup>39</sup> is an easy-to-read book that Rich Warren shares helpful instructions for readers to define the purposes and ministries of their churches. The goal of this guidance is for the church to achieve spiritual health, not quantitative growth.

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<sup>37</sup> Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011).

<sup>38</sup> Mark Dever, *What is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007).

<sup>39</sup> Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

*Truyền Giáo Vì Tình Bạn Theo Thánh Kinh: Áp Dụng Các Nguyên Tắc của Thé Kỷ Thứ Nhứt Vào Các Mối Quan Hệ Trong Thé Kỷ Hai Mươi Mốt*<sup>40</sup> (Evangelism to Friends According to the Scripture: Apply Principles of the First Century in Relationships of the Twenty-first Century) is written by Thomas Stebbins, published in Vietnamese. The author was a missionary in Vietnam. Born in Vietnam, the author speaks Vietnamese fluently, and knows how to win the heart of the Vietnamese through humor. He has become one of the most popular preachers among Vietnamese churches. Stebbins writes this book purposely for Vietnamese Christians to know how to be effective witnesses to their neighbors.

### Christological Views

Lee Patrick Strobel was a journalist of Chicago Tribune. As an atheist, in search of evidences to prove faults in Christology, Strobel in turn was convinced that Christian beliefs were more trustworthy, and became a believer. He wrote the book *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*<sup>41</sup> to explain the reasons of his conversion. Strobel's book provides various valuable resources that he had collected through interviewing thirteen credentialed theologians, biblical scholars, and church leaders such as Craig Blomberg, Ben Witherington II, and William Lane Craig to persuade readers about the reliability of Christian faith in Jesus Christ. It is a good book

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Stebbins, *Truyền Giáo Vì Tình Bạn Theo Thánh Kinh: Áp Dụng Các Nguyên Tắc của Thé Kỷ Thứ Nhứt Vào Các Mối Quan Hệ Trong Thé Kỷ Hai Mươi Mốt* (Fort Lauderdale, FL, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

for both Christians and non-Christians to see Jesus more than a human being. He was both man and God.

*Jesus Christ through History*<sup>42</sup> by Dennis C. Duling reflects Christological views of many prominent theologians since the first century to the late twentieth century. It reveals how people through centuries struggled in understanding the person of Jesus, also known as Christ. The Christological beliefs and teachings of these theologians have shaped the doctrines of the Christian Church. Through time, the Church still does not change its claim that Jesus had two full natures - one of human and the other of God.

In *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*,<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Lossky shares Christian beliefs in the Trinity from an orthodox perspective. John A. Hardon writes *The Catholic Catechism* to share Christian beliefs from Catholic perspective. Both authors review the history of Christian theology and admit that there was a time the church had struggled in understanding the person of Jesus of Nazareth; however, the church continued to accept early theology in Jesus Christ as stated in the Apostle's Creed.

### Christological Catechesis

*Giáo Lý Tin Lành Căn Bản*<sup>44</sup> (Basic Evangelical Doctrines) is a booklet written by Bau Dang, a United Methodist pastor, in Vietnamese. This booklet contains several chapters in Q&A format. Each chapter focuses on a theological topic such as the Trinity, Humanity, and Sin. After each question, the author provides a direct answer and some

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<sup>42</sup> Dennis C. Duling, *Jesus Christ through History* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978).

<sup>44</sup> Bau N. Dang, *Giáo Lý Tin Lành Căn Bản*.

explanations for his readers. The book can be used as a self-study resource or a group-study guide for new Vietnamese believers.

*Summary of Christian Doctrine*<sup>45</sup> is an aged theological resource written by Louis Berkhof. The book covers the basic doctrines of the Trinity, Christ, humanity, the Church and the Last Things in short essays. It also includes biblical references and questions for review at the end of each topic.

Rev. F. H Drinkwater writes *Teaching the Catechism, An Aid-book for Teachers*,<sup>46</sup> a doctrinal source for teaching children. The first part is based on the content of the Creed to explain the theological meanings of each statement of the Creed. The second part discusses the meanings of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. The third and last part shares Catholic understandings in the Sacraments and virtues and vices.

*A Christological Catechism, New Testament Answers*<sup>47</sup> is written by Joseph A. Fitzmyer. He formed his book in an outline of twenty questions. Most of the questions were originally not his own. They were sent to him to receive his answers as a pastoral guide resource. All of the questions relate to the person of Jesus. The purpose of the book is to provide answers for questions such as "Did Jesus clearly claim to be God?", or "How does contemporary New Testament scholarship understand the claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the Redeemer of the world?" Fitzmyer did not claim he came up to all of the answers on his own. They were a result of his study based on modern New Testament

<sup>45</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Printing, 1938).

<sup>46</sup> F. H. Drinkwater, *Teaching the Catechism: An Aid-book for Teachers* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, seventh impression, 1956).

<sup>47</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J., *A Christological Catechism: New Testament Answers* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982).

studies and researches. The book helps to know how the late twentieth century New Testament scholars understand the person, the teachings, and the role of Jesus Christ through specific yet difficult questions.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Christianity is known as the largest religion in the world based on membership. The term originates from a Hebrew word, Christos, or Christ in English. Christ alone implies to Jesus of Nazareth, who historically existed in the first century in Israel. Christians, or followers of Christ, believe Jesus was not only a unique person, but also the only Son of God, who incarnated to the world to be the Savior of humanity. Christian belief in Jesus Christ is exceptional and makes it significantly different from other religions.

Christians believe Jesus is fully a human and fully a deity. They proclaim this belief in their creeds, worships, and personal testimonies. However, to non-believers and even to many believers, it is a difficult concept to grasp. History reveals that this confusion happened in the past and continues to happen. The following studies will demonstrate that people cannot easily understand the unique identity of Jesus until they learn more about him and accept it with faith.

The first source to understand the true identity of Jesus is the biblical foundation. The Bible will reveal how the people in Jesus' time perceived him. The second source is the theological foundation. This source will tell through centuries how people around the world understand and accept Jesus. The third source of this study is the historical foundation. It reveals how Vietnamese Christians, including new believers in Ohio in the

twenty-first century, learn to know about Jesus Christ and their struggles in growing their Christian faith.

### **Biblical Foundations**

#### **Vague Understandings of Jesus Christ**

Jesus of Nazareth was a well-known figure in his time. Not only that, his life has changed the history of humanity. His birth takes an important place in the history of time. Many lives of different generations and nations change because of him. All of his followers believe that Jesus is the Son of God, came to this world as a man to sacrifice his life to save humanity from eternal death.

To learn about Jesus Christ, people must study from the Bible, especially the Four Gospels, because from these ancient sources people will know great details about Jesus' life and gain a better understanding of his ministry. However, due to the focus of this project, the area of the biblical study will be very limited. The focus will mainly discover how the people in Jesus' time struggled to accept him as their Savior.

Jesus had a special life that, according to the Gospels, the people in his time were continuously amazed. The first group of people who were supposed to know Jesus most, yet were continuously surprised about him is his own family. His birth mother Mary, who claimed her pregnancy of him was not a result of a normal intercourse but a work of the Divine (Luke 1:30-35), began to be astonished with events related to him since his birth. She witnessed how as a newborn he was welcomed nobly by others, such as the Magi (Matt. 2:11), the shepherds (Luke 2:19), or an elderly priest (Luke 2:33).

While learning through the shepherds that the heaven world, through angels, also celebrated her son's birthday, Mary was speechless. The third Gospel author described Mary's reaction, "Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). This indicated that even though being Jesus' birth mother, Mary did not quickly have a clear understanding of Jesus' true identity or his role in the world. Marshall comments about Mary's confused feeling, "The sense here is that Mary continued to think and ponder over the events as a whole so that she was able to discern their meaning".<sup>48</sup>

Joseph, like his wife Mary, knew Jesus since birth but did not really know who Jesus was. After years of raising him, they again wondered about Jesus' identity when Jesus verbally addressed God as his personal father (Luke 2:46-51). Mary continued to struggle in understanding the real person of Jesus. Since his first public miracle when Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-10) until his death and resurrection, Mary was there to witness, but never made any verbal claims regarding his divine nature.

A group of people who knew Jesus most during his three years ministry were his twelve disciples. They saw him perform various miracles, heal the sick, cast out the devil, raise the dead, reign over nature, even physically transfigure himself into a divine form. However, the Gospels did not explicitly report their clear and firm understandings regarding Jesus as a person of two full natures, of man and of God, before his death. On the contrary, they were described as either amazed or confused while witnessing many incredible things made by him. They made comments as this about Jesus, "What kind of man is this?" (Matt. 8: 27; Mark 4:41). Yarbro believed that the disciples were pondering

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<sup>48</sup> Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke: New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster Press, 1978), 114.

on Jesus' true identity.<sup>49</sup> This suggested that they did not figure out who he really was immediately. Until Jesus' very last days before his death, they were still confused about his uniqueness. The confusion was expressed through their questions in the farewell discourse regarding his identity, work, and future (John 14), even though Jesus intentionally taught them more about himself.

During his three years doing ministry, Jesus exposed himself openly in public. His teachings, miracles, and actions grew curiosity among his home town Nazareth and beyond. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” (Matt. 13:54b-56). Jesus’ neighbors thought they knew his original background well, yet actually they did not have a good ground of where he had all the special wisdom and superpower. In the midst of uncertainty, they seemed to react negatively instead of gaining a more accurate understanding of him.<sup>50</sup>

Among eye-witnesses who had general encounters with Jesus, there were those who intentionally wanted to know more about Jesus and his identity. One of them is John the Baptist, who grew up at the same time and location as Jesus did, was biologically related to Jesus, and was called to become the forerunner and the foreshadower for Jesus. Having such a personal relationship, John the Baptist supposedly knew Jesus' background well; however, John had questions regarding Jesus' identity. One day, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus to clarify himself to John, “Are you the one who is to come, or

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<sup>49</sup> Adela Yarbro, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 262.

<sup>50</sup> Daniel J. Harrington S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew: Sacra Pagina Series, Volume 1* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 212.

should we expect someone else?” (Matt. 11:3). Bowens believed that John the Baptist, like Peter (Matt. 16:22-23), did not fully understand Jesus’ mission as the Savior of the world.<sup>51</sup>

A group of people who intentionally paid very close attention to every move in Jesus’ life were the Jewish leaders. They were commonly identified in the Gospels as the Pharisees, the priests, and the teachers of the law. They were influential people in the contemporary community in terms of social, political and religious matters. Their efforts to follow Jesus, however, were not to seek to discover the truth out of respect or awe, but to degrade Jesus. On multiple occasions they heard profound teachings as well as saw powerful things that Jesus did, including calling the dead back to life; yet, they stubbornly refused to accept Jesus’ divine authority. The rejection revealed through their questions, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21).<sup>52</sup>

With no intention to seek for truths, the Jewish leaders then pursued harmful ways to end Jesus’ influence. By manipulating Jewish law and the political situation, they used the hand of the Romans to literally kill Jesus. Jesus was publicly nailed on the cross until dead. The Jewish leaders thought they had successfully gotten rid of a political troublemaker. Little did they know that their deadly clever plot had turned into a more traumatic series of events that they had no power to stop. They witnessed Jesus’ resurrection, perhaps ascension, and an emergence of a new religion against their will.

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<sup>51</sup> Lisa M. Bowens, “The Role of John the Baptist in Matthew’s Gospel,” <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d177f2f7-fc73-42c3-8901-56923205f321%40sessionmgr12&vid=30&hid=123>, 316 (accessed on July 27, 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Marshall, *Commentary on Luke: New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 214.

After numerous personal and powerful experiences with Jesus, the Jewish leaders could have become first Christians, but this group of people refused to believe in him.

### Accepting Jesus Christ

The Gospels genuinely reported people in Jesus' time struggling to recognize his true identity. They also revealed the turning point, where many uncommitted followers of the first century became strong and faithful believers of Jesus Christ. The turning point is at Jesus' resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus was a surprise to everyone in his time, even though it had been told by Jesus himself in more than one occasion. Not only did Jesus come back to life at the exact time that he had foretold, he spent forty days with different people, including his disciples, to teach them more about the Scripture and theology (Acts 1:1-3). All four Gospels report multiple incidents where Jesus had appeared and encountered with the contemporary people post-resurrection. The book of Acts, following the Gospels, indicated that the resurrection was the answer to resolve confusions and misunderstanding regarding the person of Jesus. Those who had authentically followed Jesus finally understood that he was much more than a religious figure. He was truly from heaven and he was God. Realizing that truth, their lives changed. They became committed witnesses for Jesus, now their Savior and Lord.

Their Christological understanding was reflected through the Gospels. Each Gospel evangelist had a unique way to testify the real person of Jesus. The first and third Gospels began their accounts with stories regarding Jesus' miraculous birth. The second Gospel concisely claimed Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 1:1). The fourth Gospel

evangelist, John, introduced Jesus in such an usual way that his prologue needs some exegetical work to clarify the meanings of the original author.

John started his narrative as follows, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Bible commentators believe that the opening phrase "In the beginning" was John's intention to restate the first phrase of the Hebrew Scripture.<sup>53</sup> They mutually agree that "the Word" or "Logos" at the beginning of the Johannine book (John 1:1-18) was about Jesus of Nazareth. Bultmann interpreted it vividly, "the Logos has become flesh in Jesus of Nazareth".<sup>54</sup> "John claims the Word has appeared as an actual person, Jesus Christ", stated Kostenberger.<sup>55</sup> If reading through the narrative, readers of the fourth Gospel would have no doubt that the first statement was about Jesus. Thus, for the fourth evangelist, Jesus was originally from heaven and existed before creation even though his name was not exclusively mentioned in the prologue.<sup>56</sup>

After introducing the divinity of Jesus in verse 1-4, the Johannine writer disclosed the human nature of Jesus. He mentioned Jesus "was in the world" (v.10), "came to that which was of his own" (v.11), and "became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (v.14). The evangelist added that the reason the people of his time did not recognize the true identity in Jesus was because they were spiritually in the dark (v.4). Had they

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<sup>53</sup> D. Moody Smith Jr., *John: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 49.

<sup>54</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 32.

<sup>55</sup> Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 25.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

believed in him, their lives would have been transformed from sinners to God's children (v.12).

Like other Gospels, the fourth Gospel reported powerful miracles that Jesus had done to his followers. Yet, more than other Gospels, the fourth narrative included more occasions when Jesus made speeches to reveal his true origin. For instance, in one on one conversations with Nicodemus (John 3) or with a Samaritan woman (John 4), Jesus attempted to explain his divine identity to these individuals. In these conversations Jesus always said he came from heaven to the world to become the Savior of humanity.

The fourth Gospel also included different terminologies or titles that Jesus used to reveal himself. Such titles were "the Son of Man" (1:51, 3:13-14), "the Son of God" (3:18, 10:36), "the living Bread" (6:35, 48, 51), "the Light of the world" (8:12), "the Door" (10:7, 9), "the good Shepherd" (10:11, 14), and "the true Vine" (15:1, 5). These titles emphasized not only Jesus' uniqueness but also his divine mission in this world.

Readers of the fourth Gospel can see John's Christological testimony more vividly through his descriptions of Jesus' language in the farewell discourse (John 14). Jesus repeatedly compared himself as equal to God and invited his audience to believe in him. He said, "you believe in God; believe also in me" (14:1); "If you really know me, you will know my Father as well" (14:7); "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9); "the words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (14:10).

Thus, throughout the narrative, the fourth Gospel explicitly testified that Jesus was from God and was God. The ultimate purpose of this Gospel was to persuade others to believe in Jesus as their Savior. Other Gospels were sharing the same message in

different ways. To these evangelists, Jesus was not only a special man, he is also a deity, who deserves worship, honor, and trust as God. The Gospel's recognition of Jesus Christ was a new and strong theological viewpoint compared with Jewish monotheistic belief.

The dual natures of Jesus Christ are confirmed when Christians go back to the Hebrew Scripture and study Messianic prophecies. For example, Isaiah 9:6-7 is one of the prophecies that Christians believe spoke about Jesus. Marshall saw a relation in "the Son" in Luke 1:32-33, the annunciation of the archangel Gabriel to Mary, and Isaiah 9:6-7.<sup>57</sup> Calvin believed all of the titles, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace", were about Jesus.<sup>58</sup> Watts, a more modern commentator, observes that today's Christians still understand the Messianic prophecies in Isaiah 9:6-7 are about Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>59</sup>

The people in Jesus' time did not understand Jesus' identity at first. Yet, as they learned to know him and ultimately witnessed his undoubted power through resurrection and ascension, many of them sincerely accepted him as God and Savior and followed him. New understanding in Jesus has brought a new faith and a stronger devotion for worshipping and serving God.

Although not openly declaring her convictions, Mary showed her faith and admiration for Jesus through her actions and attitude. She was faithful to him to the end (Acts 1:14). Like many first followers, the disciples did not fully recognize Jesus' divine nature before his death. They fled away during his arrest and even denied of knowing him

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<sup>57</sup> Marshall, *Commentary on Luke: New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 66.

<sup>58</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Volume I* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Beerdmans, 1958), 313.

<sup>59</sup> John D.W. Watts, *Word Bible Commentary, Volume 24, Isaiah 1-33* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985) 137.

during his execution; yet, after Jesus' resurrection, the faith of the disciples was renewed tremendously. Historical resources found that they stayed active and faithful until the end of their lives to witness for Jesus, whom they finally recognized as their Lord and God (John 20:27).

As a devout Jew of the first century, Paul was a zealous prosecutor of Christianity. After having a personal encounter with the risen Jesus (Acts 9), he learned more about Christian beliefs, and became one of the most influential leaders of the church. Paul accepted Jesus' pre-existence and divine authorization. He shared his beliefs in letters to many churches that he founded. In the first letter to the Corinthian church, he stated, "There is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live" (1 Cor. 8:6). To the Colossians, he wrote, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him." (Col. 1:15).

Thus, many first Christians struggled to recognize the true identity of Jesus Christ. The more they learned about him, the more they found truths through his life and mission. With faith, they became true and strong believers in Jesus and his teachings. They believed everything he had said will come true and spread it to the world.

### **Theological Foundations**

After Jesus' ascension, the community of Christians started to grow. The Church inherits the first hand experiences, testimonies, and teachings from the New Testament writers to learn about Jesus. However, seeing Jesus with two full natures is not a simple

belief that anyone can accept easily. This shows throughout Christianity's history. People continue to struggle to understand Jesus historically and theologically.

From the second century to the fourth century, the church grew tremendously in different parts of the world; yet at the same time, more controversies arose regarding Christology. There were four views considered very distinctive regarding the person of Jesus during this period of time. First, the viewpoint of Adoptionism, which believed in Jesus as a special human being, who was chosen or “adopted” to do extraordinary tasks for God (like Moses).<sup>60</sup> This belief recognized the humanity in Jesus but denied his divinity. The orthodox Christians rejected this view and considered it heresy, for it understood Jesus inaccurately and incorrectly.

The second theology, Docetism, had an opposite understanding of Jesus Christ, compared with the first view. Docetism highly exalted the divinity in Jesus but refused to believe that he also lived as a full human being. Since this view believed that Jesus only appears in human form,<sup>61</sup> it was also rejected by the First Council of Nicaea in AD 325.

The third Christological viewpoint which was also condemned by the early church is the Sabellianism or Patripassianism. This view saw one God in different roles. Based on Jesus' statement in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one”, they believed that Jesus while on earth was God in creation.<sup>62</sup> Their belief tended to defend Jewish monotheism but failed to see God in three separate individuals as how Christians believe in the Trinity.

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<sup>60</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 94.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 70.

In the same period of time, the church again rejected another theological viewpoint, known as the Arianism. This view believed that Jesus was not coeternal with God but the first creature.<sup>63</sup> This means Jesus was a subordinate creature, who did not have the same substance (homoousios) as of God the Father. This understanding contradicted with the Church's belief that Jesus had the same divine nature as of God; therefore, it was also concluded as a heresy and condemned by the First Council of Nicaea.

In the midst of different opinions, the early church continued to defend and to maintain Christian Christology. Some church leaders in this period of time who had made significant contributions in defending Christian beliefs were Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Athanasius. One of the biblical texts that these church leaders often used to support their theology was John 1. Irenaeus commented on Jesus' two natures, "T[he] Logos existed before creation (that is, was preexistent with God) and that he became flesh, truly suffered, and was therefore completely human". He wrote *Against Heresies*, which claimed that "The Logos was always with God and identical with, yet distinguishable from, God from the very beginning (John 1:1), prior to creation."<sup>64</sup>

Tertullian explicitly defined the Trinity God, in which Jesus is the Son, "God was one substantia shared by three personae, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the Son was the preexistent Logos; a participant in creation, and of the same substantia as the Father, though in lesser measure (both a deity and subordinate to the Father); and the Logos became flesh, was truly human, and was thus of the same substantia as man, the two

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<sup>63</sup> Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation, Volume 1* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 161).

<sup>64</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 69-70.

substantia, divine and human, being united in one persona.” Among the church leaders of the early church, Athanasius (298 – 373) wrote *On the Incarnation* to confirm Jesus Christ or the Logos in John 1:1 is the means of creation.<sup>65</sup> Jesus came to the world to die for all sinners to save them from eternal death.<sup>66</sup>

To formally clarify Christian belief from the heresies, the early Church defined Christian theological belief in a written form, also known as the Nicaea Creed.<sup>67</sup> There are two important dogmas contained in this statement of faith, which are significantly different from monotheism of Judaism. First, the Deity of Christianity is one God in three persons, the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. And second, the person Jesus Christ consisted of two full natures - humanity and divinity.

The struggles in understanding the real Jesus continued to happen after the first ecumenical council. For instance, Apollinaris in the fourth century was not convinced that Jesus fully had a human mind although having a human body and a divine mind. Nestorius (386-451) did not think it was possible to have a union of divinity and humanity in Jesus.<sup>68</sup> The Church, therefore, continued to defend the traditional Christology.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 C.E.), a brilliant theologian of the fifth century, strongly supported the Church’s theology. He stated in his book *On the Trinity* that “They who had said that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God, or not very God, or not with the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 69-77.

<sup>66</sup> Athanasius, "The Incarnation of the Word of God," <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/athanasius/incarnation/incarnation.2.htm> (accessed July 28, 2012).

<sup>67</sup> Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation, Volume 1*, 165.

<sup>68</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 77-79.

Father the One and only God, or not truly immortal because changeable, are proved wrong by the most plain and unanimous voice of divine testimonies".<sup>69</sup> Like other theologians, Augustine used the text in Johannine prologue to testify Christian belief of Jesus in two natures. Augustine wrote, "Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is God and man: God before all worlds, man in our world: God because he is the Word of God – for the Word was God (Jn 1:1) – and because a rational soul and flesh were joined to the Word in one person."<sup>70</sup>

In the following years, through Councils of Constantinople (AD 381), Ephesus (AD 431) and Chalcedonian (AD 451) the universal Church continued to reassure the doctrines of the Trinity and Christology against controversies. In the first five centuries, the Creed had been amended again and again to express more clearly Christian belief in Jesus Christ as truly God and truly man, a "hypostatic union of two natures in one person".<sup>71</sup>

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a new movement of theological learning emerged in Europe, known as Scholasticism. Duling describes this movement as to try "a new and creative synthesis of Christian theology and Greek philosophy, of faith and reason, of Christian themes (Trinity, Incarnation, and salvation) and philosophical ones (truth, freedom, and evil)". The Father of Scholasticism was Anselm (1033-1109). His rational teachings were compatible with the early Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Christology. In his view, God was in "one substance, three persons", and Jesus Christ

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<sup>69</sup> Augustine of Hippo, "On the Trinity," (Book I), <http://www.thefishersofmenministries.com/Augustine%20of%20Hippo-On%20the%20Trinity.pdf> (accessed July 14, 2013).

<sup>70</sup> Boniface Ramsey, O.P., *The Augustine Catechism: The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 65.

<sup>71</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 83.

was "the same substance as God, truly God; yet he is also the same substance as man, one person in two natures and two natures in one person".<sup>72</sup>

During this time, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), known as one of the most influential scholars, wrote a comprehensive writing, the *Summa Theologica*. In this book, he raised arguments against several contemporary and historical theologians such as Eutyches, Photinus, Manichaeus, and Valentinus, as those who held unorthodox views against the two natures of Christ. Aquinas' theology in the Trinity and Jesus Christ are seen as similar as Anselm's<sup>73</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria's. (Marshall 24). To him, the person of Christ is subsided in two natures.<sup>74</sup>

As history moves on, it came to the period of Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. People went back to study the ancient languages and the original texts. Church traditions and beliefs were to be revisited based on the Old Testament and the New Testament. Martin Luther (1483-1546), a German Catholic priest, became a shining icon during Reformation period. Zwanepol studied Luther's Christology and concluded that Luther was not interested in Christological terminologies but strongly valued the two natures of Jesus. He wrote, "Luther emphasized that our salvation is fully dependent on Jesus Christ being flesh" and quoted Luther's words to support his statement, "There is no more effective consolation than that Jesus is completely

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica," New Advent, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4002.htm#article4> (accessed on July 18, 2012).

human".<sup>75</sup> Zwanepol quoted another Luther's statement to prove that Luther valued Jesus' divinity, "If only God is able to save humans, Christ has to be God."

Duling noticed that Luther had many new ideas to reform the church, but did not have any new theology that went against the orthodox beliefs. The reformer accepted Christian Christology of Jesus Christ in two natures although did not find biblical references to support the interpretation of the church.<sup>76</sup> Duling presumed Luther had "no Christology" because he did not put theological emphasis on the church's doctrine or tradition but the Bible, especially the Gospel of John.<sup>77</sup>

John Calvin (1509-1564) was another influential thinker of the Reformation period. He was famous for writing the *Institutes of Christian Religion*, or "Christian philosophy", as he himself defined. He had the same orthodox view; that is Jesus is the begotten Son, who has both divine and human natures.<sup>78</sup> To support the divinity in Jesus, Calvin referred to many biblical texts including John 1:1, Col 1:17 and Isa 9:7. "Christ existed prior to the creation of the world and participated in it as God's "Word" or eternal Wisdom (John 1:1; Col 1:17)." <sup>79</sup> To support the humanity in Christ, he used different New Testament texts to emphasize that Jesus was born by a woman from the line of King David.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Klaas Zwanepol, "A Human God: Some Remarks on Luther's Christology," <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=d177f2f7-fc73-42c3-8901-56923205f321%40sessionmgr12&vid=22&hid=123> (July 14, 2013).

<sup>76</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 105.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>78</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 415.

<sup>79</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 116.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

During a period from 1650-1800, the Christian church was influenced by the movement of philosophy. Duling observed, "the Enlightenment had moved from Cartesian rationalism to empiricism, through skepticism, and finally to materialism, none of which was based on the Bible and revelation."<sup>81</sup> As a result, it emerged the view of Deism. This view did not believe in the divinity of Jesus or in the Holy Spirit.<sup>82</sup>

At the same time, in contrast to the view of the enlightened rationalism, was Pietism. Prominent among those who came from this tradition was John Wesley (1703-1791). Concerning Christology, on his sermon "On the Trinity" he confirmed the Three-One God is "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God" and believed "The word was made flesh" although exactly how he did not know.<sup>83</sup>

As history moves on to the nineteenth century, Protestant theology became more liberal. Duling wrote about this, "Many Protestant scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reinterpreted, neutralized, or almost totally ignored the orthodox Christ of the creeds. Instead, they see Jesus as a human prophet, or a teacher or morality, or at most as the pattern of true religious thinking, acting, or feeling." Jesus' divinity was not based on metaphysical essence but moral influence. Traditional beliefs were no longer important as individual's religious experience.<sup>84</sup>

In the early twentieth century, the studies of Jesus shifted to focus on the apocalyptic eschatology. In this liberal period, there were more voices that strongly opposed the traditional dogmatic of Jesus Christ. Among them were Adolf Harnack,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>83</sup> John Wesley, "On the Trinity," <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-55-On-the-Trinity> (accessed on July 14, 2013).

<sup>84</sup> Duling, *Jesus Christ through History*, 203-204.

Shailer Mathews, and Wilhelm Bousset. Liberalism again refused to accept the divinity of Jesus and raised oppositions to those who supported the orthodox beliefs, such as John Gresham Machen<sup>85</sup> and Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>86</sup>

Bultmann viewed Jesus as both the eschatological prophet and the unconventional rabbi.<sup>87</sup> In his commentary book *The Gospel of John*, Bultmann commented about the Logos in Johannine prologue that it was “the intermediary, the figure that is of both cosmological and soteriological significance; it is the divine being that, while existing from the very beginning with the Father, became man for the salvation of men.”<sup>88</sup> Bultmann’s theology, thus, was consistent with the belief of the early church in Jesus’ dual natures.

In the twentieth century, there were new methods to study Jesus Christ such as redaction criticism and structuralism. Redaction criticism tried to understand the theological thoughts of the original authors. Structuralism emphasized on the influence of the contemporary cultural.

In the modern time, people continue to study Christology. C. S. Lewis, one of the most well-known theologians of the twentieth century, still agreed with the statement of faith formed since the Nicaea Council over Arianism that “God does not create but begets Jesus, who has the same nature of God.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 253-254.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>88</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1971), 28.

<sup>89</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 157.

Thus, after twenty centuries, the orthodox belief defined by the early church through the Nicaea Creed has not changed. The modern Church, including the Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants, still holds on to the traditional beliefs in the Trinity God and the two full natures of Jesus Christ. By accepting orthodox Christology, it believes that Jesus is the incarnated God, who comes to the world to fulfill God's salvation for humanity.

John A. Hardon writes *The Catholic Catechism*, published in 1975. (Note that this writing is not the official Catechism of the Catholic Church promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992.) The purpose of this work is to explain and to confirm the fundamental beliefs of the Catholic Church. Regarding the beliefs on the Trinity, the contemporary Church stays firm with the beliefs of the early church. This is reflected through the first statement in Pope Paul VI's *Credo of the People of God* (1968), "We believe in one only God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."<sup>90</sup>

To answer the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?", the answer from the Catholic Catechism is, "He is the Second Person of the Trinity whom the Father sent into the world to become man of the Virgin Mary in order to save the world from sin." Thus, from Catholic theology, it is crystal that that Christ had two distinct natures, human and divine.<sup>91</sup>

Hardon admits that Christ doctrine is a complex belief. His book summarizes major historical theological views since the beginning of the church to give more information for the readers. He concludes that to this day the church's teaching about

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<sup>90</sup> John A. Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 65.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 108-109.

Jesus Christ remains unchanged and is honored and respected among Christians of not only toward the Catholics but also to the Orthodox and the Protestants.<sup>92</sup>

Hardon's writing is compatible with the Catholic Church concerning Jesus Christ. In the official Catechism, the Church explicitly verifies that Jesus is not "part God and part man" but "true God and true man".<sup>93</sup>

In parallel with the Catholic belief is the Orthodox theology. Vladimir Lossky, one of the most brilliant Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century, states "Creation is the work of the Trinity". In his book, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, he quotes Irenaeus' belief of the Trinity in creation. Irenaeus described the Son and the Holy as "the two hands of God".<sup>94</sup> Lossky also refers to St. Gregory of Nazianzus to say that the Son is the Logos. The Logos in John 1:1 links to Genesis 1:1. Lossky mentions Origen's and Meister Eckhart's Christological views and Arius' misunderstanding of the words γεννήσεις (birth), with γενεσίς (creation) to defend Christian Christology.<sup>95</sup>

In Chapter Four, Christological Dogma, Lossky affirms that Jesus Christ is a single person in two natures, divinity and humanity. He believes the two natures of Christ never mixed. He uses the historical resources from the Council of Chalcedon and St. Cyril to oppose Nestorianism and Monophysitism, and affirms, "If there is no real unity in Christ, a union between man and God is no longer possible." To explain the Transfiguration, he perceives that it only reveals the "blazing of divine energies

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>93</sup> Vatican, "Catechism of the Catholic Church", [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_P1J.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P1J.HTM) (accessed August 10, 2012).

<sup>94</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 55.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 59.

irradiating the human nature” of Jesus to the disciples. He concludes that while living as a man, Christ remains his deity.<sup>96</sup>

There is a saying that one would go crazy if trying to comprehend all theological questions, but one would lose his or her soul if not trying at all. Jesus Christ is not like other gods, because he is not a man or man-made but the living God. This is a simple but also a very profound concept that everyone, especially Christians, should know and believe. With a firm and strong belief in the incarnated Jesus Christ, people would be inspired to follow his teachings to discover the Trinity God, God’s will, purpose and plan for themselves and the world. People would find the true meaning of today’s life and peace toward the future. Not only that they would find content with their lives, they would seek to help others to find the true peace, happiness, love and meaning of life. Blessings continue to blossom as people truly understand and accept Jesus as their Lord and God.

### **Historical Foundations**

#### Evangelical Christian Resources before Vietnam War

One good way to learn about the faith of first-generation Vietnamese evangelical Christians in America is to begin with the church’s history from their native country, for their traditional faith has profoundly influenced the life of Vietnamese churches today. There are at least two reasons to support this assumption. Firstly, most Vietnamese American churches have been established and led by those who were born in Vietnam. Secondly, the majority of the adult Vietnamese Christians were also Vietnamese born. Their theology and worldviews, therefore, reflect more vividly Vietnamese traditions and

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 95-99.

culture, even though they now live in America. At VAUMC, some church members, including the current pastor, were Christians when they were still in Vietnam, and all of the adult Christians at VAUMC were born in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese Protestant Church officially has a history of about one hundred years. It began when first Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) missionaries arrived in Da Nang, Vietnam in 1911. They fulfilled a vision that Dr. A. B. Simpson (1843-1919), the founder of Christian and Missionary Alliance, had for Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, years before.<sup>97</sup>

Although they encountered many hardships due to the language barrier, cultural difference, extreme climate, conditions of living, and challenges during war time, the mission work of the C&MA in Vietnam flourished. After two years under the ministry of pioneer missionaries, the first Vietnam church was formed. A decade passed, the number of missionaries increased to twenty-two members. Seeing great needs in this mission field, the missionaries immediately made plans to do significant work that met the need and the context at the time. Their great ministries were summarized as follows:

"Primary emphasis on the planting and growth of indigenous churches. Direct evangelistic preaching of the gospel, translation of the Bible into the vernacular, the establishment of a Bible school to train native pastors and evangelists, should all be started and maintained. The publication of Christian literature should be emphasized."<sup>98</sup>

With endless efforts, after fifteen years learning and working diligently, a translation team, led by Reverend and Mrs. William C. Cadman, completed the first full

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<sup>97</sup> Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity*, 25.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

Vietnamese Bible in 1926.<sup>99</sup> It greatly helped Vietnamese Christians in the early days to study God's word and to understand Christian theology.

Under the training of the missionaries, in the following year, eight Christians were ordained to become the first Vietnamese pastors, and the Vietnamese church was officially established under the name Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam or The Vietnamese Evangelical Church.

The first pastors took leadership to expand the church in different areas of the country. More churches were established in cities and villages. The pioneer pastors became leaders to teach and to ordain other Vietnamese to become pastors. Trường Kinh Thánh Đà Nẵng (Da Nang Bible School) was established in 1921 and operated for about four decades. Due to the increasing number of seminary students, the Vietnamese Church built a new Bible school called Thánh Kinh Thần Học Viện Nha Trang (The Theological Bible Institute of Nha Trang) in the Central of Vietnam. In the first semester in 1960, the new enrollment had eighty-five students.<sup>100</sup>

The ministries of Vietnam Church gradually expanded in different areas. Since 1929, western missionaries and Vietnamese pastors cooperated to minister to minority tribes, who did not speak Vietnamese.<sup>101</sup> The ministry has become a great success. Until today, the number of Christians in the highland is always higher than the total of Vietnamese speaking Christians. In 1950s, the Vietnamese church leaders started an orphanage in Nha Trang, a city in the Central of Vietnam. For communication and

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<sup>99</sup> Phuoc Nguyen, "The History of the Vietnamese Bible Translation," Translated by Thanh Duc Hoang, 2005. [http://vnbaptist.org/Tai\\_Lieu/History\\_of\\_VN\\_bible.htm](http://vnbaptist.org/Tai_Lieu/History_of_VN_bible.htm) (accessed by July 20, 2013).

<sup>100</sup> Phu Hoang Le, *A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (1911-1965)* (Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 1972), 377.

<sup>101</sup> Tai Anh Nguyen, *The Gospel to Vietnam Centennial Celebration, 1911-2011, "Lời Giới Thiệu"* (Garden Grove, CA, 2011), 9.

printing resources, they established several national Christian magazines such as *Thánh Kinh Báo*, *Hùng Đông*, *Rạng Đông* and *Niềm Tin*.<sup>102</sup>

The Western missionaries continued to make great contributions for Vietnam. With their help, the Vietnamese had a hymnal which consisted of a few hundred of songs.<sup>103</sup> Most of the songs were western traditional hymns such as "How Great Thou Art", "It is Well with My Soul", or "Just a Closer Walk with Thee". The songs stay with the Vietnamese church after a century of use.

Western missionaries had direct impacts on the life of the Vietnam Church until all of them were forced to leave Vietnam in the last days of the Vietnam War in April of 1975. By this time, it was estimated that the number of evangelical believers had reached to 160,000.<sup>104</sup> This was a result of over six decades of serving where about two hundred missionaries made great sacrifices to help it grow. The memoirs of missionaries revealed how much they devoted their lives and the lives of their children in Vietnam in order to spread the Gospel to indigenous civilians. Not only had they experienced cultural or environmental hardships, but also some of them were missing or died painfully under the persecution of the Vietnamese government.<sup>105</sup> They had sacrificed greatly to start, to maintain, and to build up the church in this poor country.

The missionaries left Vietnam, but their works stayed. Their faith, theology, ministries never left the heart of Vietnamese Christians. Until today, Vietnamese Christians still maintain traditions and resources that Western missionaries created for

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<sup>102</sup> Le, *A Short History of the Evangelical Church of Vietnam (1911-1965)*, 323-324.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>104</sup> Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity*, 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

them. Vietnamese churches everywhere in the world still use the translations of Christian resources such as the Bible, the Apostle's Creed, the Doxology, the hymns, and more written materials that missionaries implemented in Vietnam.

Following good examples of missionaries, Vietnamese church leaders applied similar approaches in preaching, teaching, and training. Therefore, gradually more faith resources were developed by the Vietnamese with the influences of the first missionaries' theology and faith. Some of the works of the pioneer pastors are still used widely among Vietnamese churches today.

### Current Challenges of Vietnamese Christians

After the War, the church faced even harder oppositions compared with during the war time. Churches were not allowed to do ministries freely as before. The Nha Trang Theological Bible Institute was immediately confiscated in 1976. No written Christian resources could be printed or published without approvals of the government. Any church activities beyond local churches' facilities required permissions from the state government, or else face charges and prison.

The persecution under the new government was widely spread from big cities to small villages. Some Vietnamese pastors serving in the highland such as Reverend Dang Van Sung and Reverend Chung Kham Loc were missing secretly. They have been presumed dead, because after a few decades their families have never figured out where they were taken or kept. Numbers of other pastors, such as Reverend Nguyen Huu Cuong, Reverend Ho Hieu Ha, and Reverend Le Thien Dung, were imprisoned for unclear reasons. Years later, through special requests from international human rights'

agencies, these three pastors were released and allowed to come to the United States as religious refugees.

In short, under such harassments, church ministries seemed to go backward. From within, the church could not raise strong voices to its society to declare its faith or to reveal its existence widely. From outside, limitations in education and technology, plus pressures from cultures and government, prevented Vietnamese people to recognize the church's ministries.

Despite disadvantages, the evangelical church continued to grow silently in number, especially in big cities. New churches, which could not be legalized by the State, became underground churches. Churches in Vietnam gradually became complicated in term of denominational hierarchies, even though theologically they still maintained the original faith and tradition of the evangelical Vietnamese church. After thirty-five years, it is estimated that the church has grown nearly 900 percent to 1.4 million.<sup>106</sup> This number looks quite impressive; however, it is still a small number compared with the country's population. Today, Protestantism consists of 0.5 percent of the Vietnamese.

Since the end of the War, Vietnamese people scatter in many countries in the world. In USA, after almost four decades, 300 Vietnamese churches have been established. Similarly, this is not a great population among their ethnicity of 1.7 millions. A closer look at these churches, it shows that among them, two most popular denominations are the Southern Baptist Convention and the Christian and Missionary Alliance, with 130 and 100 churches respectively.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Reimer, *Vietnam's Christians: A Century of Growth in Adversity*, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Phan, *Vietnamese Americans: Understanding Vietnamese People in the United States 1975-2010*, 46.

The reason for having a large number of C&MA churches is easy to understand. These churches have been formed by Christians, who have become converted in Vietnam. Inheriting Christian theologies, traditions, and structures from their homeland, they continue to expand their ministries in the new land. All of C&MA churches associate with each other through one central leadership of their own. One big concern within C&MA churches is the shortage of new leaders. With all the opportunities in a free country for learning and serving God, not many second-generation Vietnamese Christians devote their lives to enter lifetime ministry.

Southern Baptist churches emerge significantly among Vietnamese because of two common reasons. Firstly, it is a need of Vietnamese Christians to have a community of faith to worship God and to grow their faith in their own languages. Secondly, there are not standard requirements to become ministers for a Vietnamese Baptist church; therefore, churches can be established and led by laypersons. Pastors can be ordained without academic training from an accredit Bible school. Vietnamese Southern Baptist churches function independently while maintaining mutual fellowship.

One of the needs of Southern Baptist churches, as well as many Vietnamese churches, is to train church leadership; therefore, Vietnamese church leaders create their own training programs in Vietnamese. Some new Vietnamese Bible translations were completed by a team or individuals such as Dr. Le Hoang Phu (1994) or Dr. Dang Ngoc Bau (2011). Some Bible institutions have been formed. Vietnamese C&MA churches have their own curriculum for their seminarians. The Southern Baptist church also has a couple of schools to train students through online or long distance programs. Union University of California, established since 1986, is probably the most well-known

Christian school among the Vietnamese. This school has obtained California accreditations for its Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts, and Master of Divinity programs. Most of the Bible professors at this institution are Christians since they were in Vietnam.

Overall, Vietnamese churches in America, regardless of denominational reference, have great influences of evangelical tradition and theology from Vietnam for most of their trainers became Christians when they were in Vietnam. The first Bible translation of 1926, traditional hymns, worship resources, styles, and theologies are still maintained among Vietnamese churches. Besides the differences of the denominational hierarchy and theologies, (mainly the understandings and the practices of sacraments,) Vietnamese churches are distinctive by the ways their local pastors lead them.

#### Faith-based Resources at VAUMC

The VAUMC has been in active over two decades under the leaderships of two pastors. The first pastor was Reverend Paul Tran. He was the founder of the church and ministered this congregation for almost twenty years. Besides ministering VAUMC in Columbus and Dayton weekly, Tran also ministered another group of Vietnamese Christians in Cincinnati. This group had mid-week worship services every other week.

Tran himself was a first-generation Vietnamese American, who became a Christian many years before he came to the United States. He was ordained by the United Methodist Church and earned a Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary.<sup>108</sup> Historical church resources such as bulletins indicated that Tran had lead

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<sup>108</sup> Tran, *A New Paradigm for Women Leaders in Vietnamese Congregations in the Twenty-first Century*, 1-4.

VAUMC to follow United Methodist theology, mixed with Vietnamese Evangelical church tradition, and Vietnamese culture.

Under Tran's leadership, VAUMC maintained weekly worship services. They used a few Vietnamese Bible translations, mainly the oldest published in 1926. They regularly cited the Lord's Prayers, the Apostle's Creed, which were written in the back of their Vietnamese hymnal, and sang the Doxology theme during offering. For worship, they sang hymns, contemporary Western praise songs, and Vietnamese Christian songs. On special events, they celebrated Lunar New Year, Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas to maintain church traditions, American traditions, and Vietnamese traditions. Their worship resources and style are seen as typical as many other Vietnamese churches in America are.

VAUMC does not have many historical resources in writing. The most data they still keep through the years are the weekly offering records. These records show that VAUMC's members did not make great efforts in giving. Their monthly offerings were often less than a thousand dollars. As a result, the balances of their bank account were usually a few thousand dollars. They had few versions of hymnals, each consisted of about two hundred songs, but according to a long time church member, they only knew about twenty songs. There were no evidences of them having regular Bible study programs or Sunday School classes in addition to weekly worship services.

Through verbal conversations, some long-time church members, who are still active with the church, state that VAUMC has had many up and down moments in the past. People often joined then left the church. In some cases, they moved away due to personal reasons; in other cases, people left because they no longer wanted to associate

with the church or had personal conflicts with other church members. By the time Tran left VAUMC in June of 2008, the size of VAUMC was in the low twenties. VAUMC had no pastor for about four months, then in November 2008, Esther Dang came as their new pastor.

Born into a pastor's family, Dang grew up where she was familiar with the Vietnamese church's tradition and theology. She did not plan to make any significant changes regarding the VAUMC's traditions and resources. In her opinion, there was nothing negative toward the faith of Christians at VAUMC if they continued to preserve church's resources and traditions. Dang was convinced that 'not what to minister' but 'how to minister' has greater effects on the spiritual growth of the parishioners. With that perspective, she studied the current situation at her church and started to make some changes. The following sections are her observations about the spirituality of VAUMC and her attempts to help them grow spiritually.

#### Spiritual Assessment at VAUMC

After ministering VAUMC for a short period of time, Dang had recognized the contextual issues that she mentioned in Chapter One. The challenges are reminded here as the following observations: The people at VAUMC are first-generation Christians; with not much background in Christian context, they are new to orthodox theology. Due to limited educational experience, language barrier, and low technology skills, they cannot gain theological knowledge on their own. Living in an unpopular area among the Vietnamese, VAUMC has no fellowships and opportunities to gain faith experiences with

other Christian communities. As immigrants, they put their focus on economic prosperity to support their children.

As a Vietnamese, Dang understands the challenges in growing faith of her parishioners as well as their views of faith and life. On the other hand, as a Christian, who has also experienced Christian struggles, she was convinced that the root cause of all of the problems at this church is their immaturity in spirituality. The following is her observations about their spiritual status.

New Christians at VAUMC do not have a solid biblical and theological knowledge, even though they have been attending church regularly for years. They usually cannot answer accurately basic biblical facts such as popular biblical events or characters. Regarding theology, like non-Christian Vietnamese, new Christians at VAUMC have serious misconceptions of the Trinity. They believe that besides God of Christianity, there are other supernatural gods. Regarding Jesus, they perceive him as a special person, who has God's favor to do incredible tasks, yet do not realize that he is a deity. They do not have a good understanding of the Holy Spirit. They generally assume that all religions are good and teach valid lessons about afterlife.

While having a vague understanding of God and a tolerant view of religions, new Vietnamese Christians consciously feel comfortable about their spiritual lives, for they simply think they already have a religion to practice their faith. They assume that by attending church regularly, they are active worshipers, and that is all they should be. They have not truly understood what it means to be a Christian.

Because of their immaturity in spirituality, the adults do not see the importance of faith in their children's lives, and do not set good examples for their children. The parents

focus on making a living. Their purposes, devotions, or determinations in life do not aim to reflect their faith in God or for God. Often, they let the children decide whether or not they would like to go to the church. They do not seem to be concerned whether or not the church has good programs to help their children to grow in faith. As a result, after years, VAUMC gradually lost young generation, and that leads to the decrease of the church attendance.

The inexperienced viewpoints about the church of the first-generation Vietnamese Christians do not only have immediate effects on their relationship with God or the growth of their local churches, but also a long-term effect on the future of the church worldwide. Because of the generational gap, the church lacks young leaders to follow the adults' footsteps and to lead the next generation. This is a concern not only for VAUMC but also for Vietnamese American churches in general. For almost four decades, only a small number of the young Vietnamese American Christians has enrolled in seminaries. Everywhere, Vietnamese churches are in need of leadership.

Because of their immaturity in Christian understanding and experience, new Christians have no great concerns for the mission of the church anywhere. They do not even understand how their own church survives financially, and do not make generous financial contributions to their local church. Needless to say, they have no interests in sharing their faith to other non-believers. As soon as they leave the church building, they return to reality.

### Recent Faith-growth Programs at VAUMC

As a Vietnamese, the current pastor sympathizes with her parishioners regarding their faith challenges as well as their views of life. Biblically, she sees the similarities between their daily struggles with the challenges that Jesus mentioned in the parable of different types of soils in Matthew 13:3-23. The parable indicates that in order to bring good fruits, Christians must follow God's teachings to defeat both internal obstacles of the flesh and external obstacles of the world and of the devil. It is obviously not an easy battle for new Christians to win, especially when they have not clearly understood the basic doctrine of their faith. Like the first Christians in Jesus' time, they need to truly understand Jesus as who he really is to follow him with full commitment and devotion.

Learning from experience, Dang convinces that believers cannot grow spiritually without learning more about God through the Bible, for she believes it is the most tangible and powerful nutrition of spirituality that believers can receive spiritual strength. Moreover, it is one of God's great ways to reveal theological truth to humanity.

To help the congregation to enhance biblical understanding, a weekly Bible reading program was implemented. Each Sunday, participants take home a bulletin, which includes Bible reading assignments and questions related to the reading references. From Monday through Saturday, the congregants read one chapter assigned per day and answer a given question about that chapter. On the following Sunday, they review the questions together during their worship service.

Reviewing a Bible reading assignment is not a typical thing for a congregation to do during worship time; however, Dang encourages her church to continue, because it is the only time during a week that they can improve their biblical understanding together

effectively. The Bible reading plan works well for them. All regular attendees become regular Bible readers. Each week, they enthusiastically participate in the reviewing Bible moments. They find this time interesting because through it they gain more biblical knowledge. While studying about Vietnamese evangelical churches in the Greater Ohio Valley region, Dennis Crump visited VAUMC in 2010 and recognized the importance of the Scripture through Bible Review minutes in this congregation's worship services. He mentioned it a few times in his books.<sup>109</sup>

In parallel with enhancing biblical knowledge, VAUMC also learns more hymns, contemporary western songs, Vietnamese Christian songs, and hears more sermons about offering and giving. As their hearts are open to accept new changes, their spiritual seeds begin to flourish positively. Year after year, their contribution on supporting pastor's salary package and ministries beyond their local church continue to increase. By 2013, their contribution for pastor's salary package has increased to \$24,000, which is 250% increased from five years before. Each year, they give a few thousand dollars to support various ministries for the Vietnamese worldwide. Excluding those expenses, the balance in their bank account maintains five times higher than a few years before. The regular attendance has also increased to almost triple.

After a few years, VAUMC has made some progress in some areas such as Bible reading, offering, and attendance. However, there were other spiritual disciplines such as praying, fasting, or witnessing that the current pastor hoped to see more improvement but has not seen that happened. Dang convinced that the main reason of their uncommitted spirit was because they had not solidly understood the person of Jesus and the work of the

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<sup>109</sup> Crump, *Contextualization of the Public Worship Practices of Vietnamese Protestant Churches in the Greater Ohio Valley Region*, 101.

Holy Spirit. In other words, they have not had a strong personal relationship with God. In order for them to be totally devoted, the researcher believes that they needed to explore more who God is, what God means to them, or what God wants for their lives; otherwise, their relationship with God will not go further than a formal faith practice. With more theological understandings, new believers will not only maintain their faithfulness with God, they also have stronger passions to serve God through the church.

For that reason, Dang made plans to preach more about the Trinity. As the same time, she decided to utilize her doctoral project as an opportunity to assist her congregation to learn about God more systematically. She is convinced that Bible and theology must be learned side by side to strengthen Christian faith effectively; therefore, she chose Christology as the first topic for her congregation to learn about the Trinity. Even though she was tempted to cover other topics such as about the Holy Spirit, she did not want to extend the domain of the project further because she wanted her congregants to put priority on learning about Jesus. To her, it is easier and also important for them to know more firmly who Jesus is, what he has done for them, and what he expects from them as his followers; therefore, she aimed for the effectiveness of the training rather than the depth of her project. Her training content and plan are described in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### **The Objectives of the Methodology**

The primary goal of the project was to teach new believers, who did not have a good background in Christianity, to gain a better understanding of Christian theology. In order for them to learn effectively in a limited amount of time, the researcher focused the project only on teaching Christology. She intended to make the project stress-free so her students could complete the course fully, as most of them were middle-aged and had a limited educational experience. To make the course simple to complete, the course required only seven meetings, and catechesis in multiple-choice questionnaires was the only teaching method to be used in the training course.

Besides teaching Christology, the researcher also hoped to achieve a few additional things through the training program. Since these students were more familiar with learning through listening, by trying to answer written multiple-choice questions, they will experience a new way of learning theology, which requires them to think and to reflect what they know in writing, even only through selecting provided answers. Learning catechesis and re-learning the lessons might help them to memorize what they learn more effectively. Upon completion of the course, students will have a better assessment of their theological knowledge, and this might motivate them seek further faith-based studies. Also, students are expected to put what they have learned into

practice, especially with evangelism. The purpose of the project, after all, is to help students become more committed and active Christians.

### **The Description of the Training Sources**

The materials for the course consisted of a series of five lessons, six surveys, one assignment, a final exam and a two-part evaluation. All the materials were created in multiple-choice format to make it possible for entry level students to complete the course. There were total of one hundred questions in the lessons, and forty-eight questions in the surveys. The final exam had forty questions, and the evaluation had fifteen questions.

Besides multiple-choice questionnaires, the researcher did not plan to include any qualitative learning methods such as one-on-one interviews or short essays, because most of the students at VAUMC did not have good educational experiences or strong theological understandings. She did not want to make them feel unqualified to learn. Her main goal while creating this training was so anyone, regardless of their educational and faith backgrounds, could participate in it. The only requirement for this course was the student's ability to read.

The researcher also did not create a consent form or a covenant document because she did not want her students to feel pressured since they were not familiar with making commitments even for learning purposes. The researcher was positive that with their willingness to learn she would get enough feedback for analysis and evaluation.

Each lesson was different in length. The shortest lesson contained fifteen questions, and the longest lesson had twenty-eight questions. Each question had three to six suggested answers, and one of them was expected to be selected as the most correct

answer. Other options contained suggestions based on common secular viewpoints or close to correct information. The questions were designed this way to urge students to read and to think about each suggestion carefully before choosing the most correct answer for each question. Learners were challenged to discern biblical teachings or Christian theological understandings from personal opinions or common social perspectives.

At the end of each lesson, there was a review question. It required the students to recognize the main theme of the lesson. The purpose of this question was to remind the students of the lesson's theme they just learned. It was also a way to evaluate their learning skill, that is to find out if they grasped the main point of the lesson or not.

The central theme of the lessons was on Jesus Christ. The first lesson taught basic doctrines about the Trinity. It is an introduction about Jesus, who should not be known just as a religious figure but also a Deity as God the Father and the Holy Spirit are. Students were reminded of Jesus' origin, characteristics, and divine power.

The second lesson focused on the life of Jesus while living on earth. It covered the major events from his birth to ascension, and emphasized his divine and human natures. The purpose of this lesson was to help students see Jesus more than a human being. This is the ultimate intention of the entire training program. As students discover more profoundly the identity of their Savior and Lord, they will appreciate his love and sacrifice, and be more willing to worship and to serve him.

The third lesson was to encourage students to know Jesus' teachings in both religious and personal aspects of life such as about worship or money. Students will find out biblical teachings among common secular or personal perspectives. Certain questions

were raised not only to teach students biblical teachings but also to encourage them to apply what they learn in their daily lives.

Lesson Four brought up some common, but difficult questions regarding salvation. The goal of this lesson was for students to have a better understanding of God's final judgment on each individual based on his or her faith. The questions intended to clarify some ambiguities regarding the next life and to highlight Jesus' role as the Savior and the final judge of the world.

The last lesson focused on the Church. Through this lesson, the learners could see how they were cooperatively related with Jesus through the church. They were expected to understand more about how the Protestant Church was formed, where their church is in the church's hierarchy, as well as their basic Christian duties as the body of Christ in the world.

While creating the material and questions for this course, the researcher always placed herself in the position of non-believers and new believers, for she hoped to clarify some biblical and theological ambiguities that students might have. She was selective in choosing questions and forming suggested answers with the hope to make the lessons concise and helpful.

Overall, the researcher did not find it too difficult to come up with biblical questions, but she did feel challenged while creating theological questions, especially in Lesson Four. For example, the researcher found Question 14 in that lesson difficult to answer. The question was concerned about the destiny of those who do not know Jesus, believe in God, and also believe in other gods. The question was, will these people go to heaven? The researcher used a biblical reference in Exodus 20:2-5 regarding the first and

second commandments in the Ten Commandments as a hint, but she did not think it fully revealed the answer. After having some personal research and consultations through emails with a few pastors, she chose the last answer, that is Jesus will decide the fate of these people instead of the first two answers, which say all will be saved, and none will be saved.

As mentioned previously, the goals of the training course were to help new believers to think, to remember, and to share more openly what they know about Jesus Christ, their Lord. To achieve this goal, the researcher tried to form the content and the order of the catechesis systematically, so that the students could understand the lessons concisely, without much discussion.

Learning catechesis is usually not very effective without repetition; therefore, to help the students memorize what they learn better, it was planned for the lessons to be studied at least three times each. First, each lesson would have a printed-out pre-test in the beginning of each session. The pre-test was actually the exact content of the lesson. Without any guidance, the students would complete the pre-test by themselves. Their answers were what they knew before learning the lessons. Next, the researcher would guide the class to go through the same material through a PowerPoint presentation to discover the correct answers. The material would be used the third time through PowerPoint, as they all review the results of the pre-test together at the beginning of the following session.

Six surveys were made for the course. The first survey would collect the students' opinions on what non-Christian Vietnamese thought of Jesus. The reason behind this survey was to help students see in what ways the Vietnamese misunderstand Jesus; from

this, they would know how to help the non-believer. The other five surveys collect the opinions of the students regarding the themes of the lessons. It was a way to introduce the lesson, also for the students to engage in sharing their Christian viewpoints and experiences regarding religious matters. Through the results of the surveys, students would have a better view of where they were on their journeys of learning theology.

Throughout the course, there was only one assignment, which would be handed out after the end of the last lesson. The assignment was expected to be completed within two weeks prior to taking the final exam. The details of the assignment were below:

1. Read the book of Mark (the shortest Gospel)
2. Pray at least 15 minutes everyday
3. Pray for a person with whom you want to share your faith
4. Share your Christian faith with the person prayed for above
5. Review the lessons for the final exam

The purpose of the assignment was to encourage the students to remember what they learned about Jesus from the past and from the catechesis, and to practice sharing that immediately with others.

The content of the final test consisted of forty questions selected directly from the lessons. The questions were selected not for measuring the effectiveness of the training, but primarily to remind the students of important details regarding Jesus Christ, their Lord. The result of the final exam would be used to compare with the average score of the pre-tests to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

The last items to be given to the students were a series of five self-evaluation questionnaires and a course's evaluation form of ten questions. Each question was rated

on the scale from one to ten. The self-evaluation questions were for the students to report how well they have completed each part of the assignment. The other evaluation form was for the students to share their thoughts of the entire training course. The students were expected to share how the course helped them learn Christian theology, how the learning experience affected their faith as well as their relationship with God, and whether they would recommend the training resource to others. Through their feedback, the researcher would know what she should do to improve her teaching method for future students.

All of the materials of this training course were prepared in both English and Vietnamese and are included in Appendix A-N.

### **The Teaching Plan and Method**

On the first week, the researcher used the first survey as a way to start the course. Then, she briefly shared her reasons and purposes for teaching the course. By pointing out that believing in Jesus is a crucial difference between Christianity and other world religions, she invited them to discover Jesus in order to have a better understanding and attitude toward their Savior. She then introduced the contents of the course through the syllabus and invited the students to participate faithfully.

In the following five weeks, at the beginning of each session, a new survey was to be handed out to the students, and then they took a pre-test. After collecting the survey and the pre-test for the day, the teacher guided the class to get the correct answers of the pre-test, now served as the lesson of the day, through a PowerPoint presentation. The students were encouraged to raise questions at anytime. Before ending the session, the

teacher gave a hard copy of the lesson to anyone who wanted to review the lesson at home.

After the class, the researcher entered the input data of the survey and the pre-test of ten selected students into SurveyMonkey, an online quantitative tool. The analysis feature of this tool automatically showed the percentage of all answers. Each answer, whether it is a correct or incorrect answer, had a score between zero and ten in accordance to how many people from the student sample chose that answer. The researcher then put all of the results in a PowerPoint, which showed the percentage of each answer. At the beginning of the next session, she showed the results to the students. Through this report, students were again reminded of what they have learned from the previous week, and know how well they did on the last pre-test as a team.

The following is a detailed explanation about how the researcher would gather the result of a question from SurveyMonkey application. For example, the first question of Lesson One, Who is God?, has four suggested answers, a through d. Among the ten sample students, one of them chose answer a, two of them chose answer b, three of them chose answer c, and the last four students, chose answer d. Thus, after entering their answers in SurveyMonkey, the percentages of this question is 10%, 20%, 30%, and 40% for answers a through d respectively. Since answer c is the most correct answer, it reflects that only 30% of the students knew this answer before taking the lesson. It also tells answer d is the most common view that the students had for this question, even it is a wrong answer.

Not only knowing the results of the pre-tests as a team, the researcher also kept track of the selected students' grades in an Excel sheet. From there, she could find out the grade's range and grade average of the class.

After the last lesson, the teacher returned all the pre-test papers with the correct answers highlighted for the students along with an assignment sheet. The students had two weeks to complete the assignment. On the final session, they completed the final exam, the self-evaluation form, and the course's evaluation form. Again, the researcher used the data provided by the students sample to do an analysis through SurveyMonkey. She compared the result of the final test in percentage to the total points of each sample student to find out how many students achieved higher grade at the end of the training course, and compared the pre-tests' average point of the ten selected students to the average point of their final tests to evaluate the effectiveness of the entire training program.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FIELD EXPERIENCE

#### **The Description of the Implementation**

The course was taught to the Vietnamese congregations in Columbus and Dayton from February to May 2013 during Sunday school right after worship services. A couple of changes were made during the implementation. At first, the project was originally planned to be taught to only ten new believers. The researcher also considered to invite some long-time church members to lead the class; however, they were not quite ready and they requested to be the students themselves. Since the size of the congregation was relatively small, all church attendees were encouraged to take the course, which was taught at two locations – Columbus and Dayton. The researcher conducted both classes.

Overall, there were forty adult students participated in the class, and eighty percent of them fully completed the course. In order to analyze the input data easily, only the ten new believers were selected to be the primary participants of the project; that means only the input data of these ten students were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training program. While the adults were studying, the first three lessons in English were also used to teach the children of ages seven through fourteen by their teachers, who had been provided the material and answer keys ahead of time.

This course was designed to be completed in seven sessions. The first session was an introduction to the course. As planned, to start off the course, the researcher asked the

class to fill out the first survey to get the student's opinion regarding the viewpoints of Vietnamese non-believers on Christianity. Taking surveys or answering multiple-choice questions regarding new topics was a new learning method for the students; they seemed to enjoy doing it. It only took a few minutes for the students, who could read well, to complete the first survey. For the others, some explanations were needed from the teacher or friends to understand some questions before selecting answers. The first survey took about ten minutes.

After collecting the survey's handouts, the researcher explained the topic, reason, and purpose of the course, which was to learn about Jesus Christ. The students agreed with the researcher that it was important and necessary for them to explore the topic in depth. On the first day, they participated willingly and actively. The researcher did collect more than the amount of data needed for her analysis.

In the following five weeks, the teacher used two types of material, surveys and lessons, both in multiple-choice format to present to the students. The themes and the contents of the surveys and the lessons could be found in Appendix A-N. In accordance to the plan, the students first filled out a survey, related to the theme of the lesson, at the beginning of each session. The students seemed to enjoy answering the survey questions because it gave them a chance to share their opinions regarding religious matters; then the students did the pre-test on their own.

Although the students have been learned about some parts of the lessons before, they struggled when answering the questionnaires by themselves, because learning Christian theology through catechesis was foreign to them. It required the students to understand the questions by themselves, to think critically, and to make decisions before

selecting the answers they wanted to choose. Once in a while, they asked the researcher to explain the given material because they did not clearly understand the meaning of some of questions. They often noted that they considered multiple answers as correct and did not want to narrow it down to one. With such thoughts in mind, they ended up selecting more than one option for some of the questions, even though they understood that they should have only chosen one answer for each question.

On average, the students spent about twenty to thirty minutes to complete each pre-test. The students who had a higher education usually completed the tests faster than the ones who did not. Those who had a lower reading level or did not understand the lessons well sometimes made guesses to complete the tests.

While taking the pre-tests, the students often commented on the material, such as some terminologies sounded ambiguous or some questions were hard to know the correct answers. The researcher took note of their feedbacks. Based on their comments, she revised the material to make it easier to understand and saved it for future usage.

After collecting the pre-test, the researcher guided the class to study the lesson, which consisted of the same content as of the pre-test that they just took, through PowerPoint. For each question, the teacher did not immediately indicate its answer, but invited the class to figure it out themselves. The class worked together to provide the correct answers, also to explain why some of their initial answers were not correct. Rarely, did they ever mention that they had misunderstood the questions. Instead, they stated that they did not already know the correct answers, and so made wrong choices. Most of the time, while learning together, the students easily understood and accepted the correct answers after hearing the explanations provided by others. Once in a while, the

researcher used Bible references to explain further until they all agreed with the given answers.

The researcher always encouraged the student to raise questions before the session ended. Long-time church members were encouraged to provide answers or explanations when more questions were raised. For example, one student asked, "In what type of body or appearance does Jesus now have?" Questions raised by the students, however, were only a few. It seemed as the students felt they have learned enough for the day and ready to go home.

In general, the time the students spent going through the lessons was usually shorter than the time the students spent to complete the pre-tests. Perhaps, it was because they still remembered the material that they had just learned. Also, their teacher did not want to extend the lesson deeper than what she had prepared due to their limited time.

After figuring out the correct answers, the students usually expressed mixed feedback concerning the lessons. Even though they all enjoyed learning new topics, most of them, including long-time church members, did not think they did well on the pre-tests. Even though the format of the lesson looked simple, the questions required their thinking and knowledge prior to select answers. They did not feel confident selecting the answers because the content of the lessons were still new to them.

After each session, the researcher put the answers of ten selected students in SurveyMonkey tool to collect the results of the surveys and the pre-tests. At the beginning of the following week, she let the class see the results of the previous week. While reviewing the feedback of the surveys, the students often commented they were not surprised, because they had similar background, experiences, and opinions. They

admitted that they were new Christians, who did not know much about Christian theology as well as Church history and hierarchy. Regarding the results of the pre-tests, the students did not seem surprised either. Again, they accepted their test results easily. They knew where they were in their journey of faith. They had a lot to learn.

The time the students completed each session was different. The shortest time was approximately one hour, and the longest session was about an hour and twenty minutes. All of the sessions always began right after their worship services, for it was the only time during the week that they all could learn together. For the teacher, being sensitive about the time, she therefore felt pressured to complete her teaching quickly. She did not go in depth into the lessons as she wanted because she sensed her students' eagerness to be dismissed. She knew, for most of them, Sunday was the only day during the week that they could take care of personal business, and they already spent a half of their day at the church.

On the sixth session, which was after learning the last lesson, the students received an assignment sheet and all of their pre-tests back. Their papers had been graded and corrected, so they could tell which ones were the correct answers. The students had two weeks to restudy the material and to complete the assignment before the final exam.

On the seventh session, the students took the final exam and filled out two-parts of an evaluation form. No one complained about the length of the final exam, which consisted of forty questions. Since all of the questions in the final exam were selected directly from the lessons, no one seemed surprised, but they still did not seem to complete the exam with great confidence. While filling out the first part of the evaluation

form, which was to evaluate themselves based on the homework assignment, they admitted that they did not prepare well for the final exam.

The program was supposed to be completed after seven sessions. However, the researcher added an extra debriefing session to share her results and analyses with the participants. She showed them the final results and encouraged them to continue their theological learning journey by giving out some awards. One award was for the person who achieved the highest self-evaluation score, and some other awards for those who had the highest scores on the final exam.

### **The Results of the Implementation**

Overall, the course was completed quite smoothly. The following section is the researcher's analysis of the training material. The sources of data for her analysis were from the surveys, the pre-tests, the assignment, the final test, and the evaluation forms of ten selected participants. Due to the large number of questions included in the course, the results of all input data will not be displayed or discussed in detail. Only samples and overall statistics or observations will be shared.

#### **The Result of the Surveys**

Overall, the feedbacks from the students through the surveys were very insightful. They confirmed the assumption that the Vietnamese people did not have a firm knowledge of Christian beliefs and traditions. Nine out of ten participants thought more than fifty percent of the Vietnamese had never heard the concept of the Trinity. They also agreed that most Vietnamese had no access to the Bible or direct experience with the

church's activities. Regarding Jesus Christ, the Vietnamese simply viewed him as any other religious leader. They did not know or understand that Jesus was more than a human, and that he was actually a Deity. According to new VAUMC members, Vietnamese non-believers might be interested in knowing more about Jesus Christ, but at the same time they strongly want to preserve their current religions.

To reflect on themselves, among the new believers at VAUMC, only one person considered himself a former atheist. The others, who had been Buddhists or ancestor worshippers, used to think of God as one of many supernatural gods. Like other Vietnamese non-believers, they did not really understand the concept of the Trinity, did not read the Bible, or did not personally involve themselves with a church prior their conversions.

The students shared that they had various reasons for becoming Christians. Common reasons include being blessed in this life, keeping a social fellowship with others, or following the same religion as of their family members. Only a few of them actually approached Christianity because they wanted to seek the truth. They admitted that since they have become Christians, they have rarely shared their faith with others, even their own family members.

Before becoming Christians, the new believers had heard of Jesus occasionally from different sources inside and outside of the church. Like other non-Christians, they used to view Jesus as only a religious figure. Sixty percent of them are now the first Christians in their families. For those who already had at least one Christian in their families, they did not hear about the Gospel from their Christian family members. The students agreed that the most common reason why Vietnamese Christians did not boldly

share their faith to others was because they felt hesitant to talk about faith, an uncommon and sensitive topic, to their fellow Vietnamese. In addition, they did not care to talk about it or did not know what to say.

Even after being Christians for some years, the students, however, did not grade themselves highly in the areas related to Bible knowledge, theology, or the Church. They considered themselves active believers, but admitted that they had a limited understanding of the aspects mentioned above. They all agreed that it was important to know the truth, and wanted to widen their knowledge regarding Christianity.

#### The Result of the Pre-tests

After each class, the researcher entered the pre-test's answers of the ten previously selected students into the SurveyMonkey tool. Each answer, whether it was the correct or incorrect one, thus had a score between zero to ten. She then added the total score of the correct answers and calculated the score's percentage for the entire class for each pre-test. For example, Lesson One or the first pre-test had fifteen questions. A perfect score for each correct answer is ten, and a perfect score for the whole lesson is 150. Based only on the input scores of the correct answers, the total point for the first pre-test was 118, which means, the score of the entire class was 118/150 or 78.6% for Lesson One. Table 5.1 below summarizes the results of the pre-tests and the final exam.

Table 5.1. Results of the Pre-tests and the Final Exam

Tests	No. of questions	No. of participants	Total points of correct answers	The class' grade	Percentage of grade
Pre-test 1	15	10	118	118/150	78.6%
Pre-test 2	28	10	197	197/280	70.4%
Pre-test 3	18	10	90	90/180	50.0%
Pre-test 4	19	10	103	103/190	54.2%
Pre-test 5	20	10	92	92/200	46.0%
Final Exam	40	10	280	280/400	70.0%

After knowing the participants for a few years, the researcher thought she knew how well her students understood Christian theology. There were some questions that she thought most of the students would know the answer immediately, as they had learned about these topics occasionally through sermons and Bible study lessons. However, a lot of time, the students chose wrong answers. For instance, the question on Jesus' physical power, 'Did Jesus have superior physical powers compared to a normal person?'. All of the ten new Christians answered Yes.

Lesson One about God was the shortest and the most familiar topic of the entire series. Through their answers in the pre-test, a couple of students still understood God not as the Creator, but as a powerful human. The researcher did not expect to see this result, because these students have been regular church attendees for a few years now. They were old, but not illiterate. The researcher did not think that they misunderstood the questions or forgot the answer. She was more convinced that they did not have a clear understanding of God. Although surprised, she was glad she now knew what they thought, even though it was biblically incorrect.

The results of the pretests revealed that the students were not very clear about other theological concepts. For example, regarding the concept of the Trinity, only thirty

percent of them knew the Trinity as one God in three persons. Regarding the spiritual world, students thought that deities or gods existed and lived beside the God of Christianity.

Based only on the feedbacks of the ten new believers, only four out of fifteen questions in Lesson One had achieved full points. That is, as a team of ten, they answered four questions completely correct. The point value of other correct answers fell between three and nine. That means, there were some questions that more than half of them did not choose the right answer. The total points based on the correct answers of the whole class for this lesson was 78.6%, the highest score of the entire series.

Lesson Two was the longest and the most crucial lesson of the series because it was about the life of Jesus Christ. Among twenty-eight questions, the students altogether answered only five questions correctly. Their answers showed that they had mixed conceptions of who Jesus was. This indicated that they did not firmly know the significant events in Jesus' life, which could be found easily in the Gospels. Note that in the last few years, they had participated in Bible reading plans, which covered all of the books in the New Testament, a few times. The score for this lesson was 70.4%.

Lesson Three was about Jesus' teachings, and out of eighteen questions, the students answered only one, which is about the two greatest commandments, correctly. Their answers suggested that they based their answers on their personal opinions instead of their biblical knowledge. For example, on the matter of divorce, 50% of them assumed it was alright to pursue divorce when it was irreconcilable; and 40% of them thought divorce was acceptable when it was legal according to civil law. They made similar choices for other matters such as worship, money, or fasting, although the questions

clearly stated that "What did Jesus teach", and not "What do you think". Not only did they not know Jesus' teachings concerning earthly life well, they did not perform well on questions regarding eschatology or eternal life. The entire class as a whole got 50% on this lesson.

The students seemed to be very interested in learning Lesson Four, which raised difficult theological questions, such as God's judgments for the people of other religions. Again, they guessed more on these questions than they actually knew the right answers. Even though most of the questions included biblical references, the students did not make time to search for hints from the Bible. Either they were not familiar in doing so, so they were not able to understand biblical references by themselves, or time did not allow them to do so. Like the previous lesson, out of nineteen questions, the students only answered one correctly. Together, the score that they received for this lesson was 54.2%.

The students admitted that the last pre-test, or Lesson Five, about the Church was the most difficult topic, for they did not have a good knowledge about the history of the Church. In reality, other than their local church, they did not have any fellowships with other churches in the neighborhood or with their ethical church community, due to language barriers and geographical location. Their lack of church knowledge was also a result of a limited education and life experience. One this last pre-test, none of their answers got the full score of ten. Note, some of the questions were about their own local church, such as their church's denomination. Compared to the other lessons, they received the lowest score in this one, which was 46%.

Regarding the last questions of each lesson, which recapped the themes of the lessons, none of the expected answers of all five lessons reached perfect scores. This

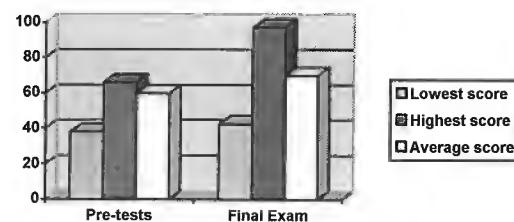
meant the students either did not clearly understand what they just learned, immediately forgot what they just learned, or did not think carefully prior to answering the questions. Another possible reason is that some students felt pressured to complete the test as they knew others were waiting for them; therefore, they might have answered the last questions hastily. In any case, the results of the last questions were compatible with the results of the pre-tests, which were not perfect.

After adding the scores of all five lessons, the researcher found that for a class of ten students the average percentage of the pre-tests was 60%. No one among the new believers received a perfect score on any pre-test. Based on the percentage of all five pre-tests (100 questions), the grade range fell between 38% and 66%. Two students who received the highest and lowest scores had the same age, gender, and have been Christians for the same amount of time. The person with the higher score, however, had a better educational experience.

Using the same method to calculate the class' score on the final test, it showed that the students got a higher average score, which is 70%. From the pre-tests, 27.1% of the answers had scores below five. There were scores under five for the final test also; however, the percentage was lower at 17.5% or 7/40 questions. Thus, based on the incorrect answers, the result seemed to get better. Comparing between the grade range of the final scores, which is 42.5% - 97.5%, with the score's range of the pre-tests, it also showed a similar improvement. Below is a chart that shows some differences before and after the training based on the data from Table 5.2, which is the score's ranges and the average score of the pre-tests and the final exam.

Table 5.2. Pre-tests vs. Final Exam

	Pre-tests	Final
Lowest score	38	42.5
Highest score	66	97.5
Average score	60	70



### The Result of the Evaluations

Five questions from the self-evaluation form about the assignment were handed out two weeks before the final test. (The details of the assignment can be found in Appendix A-N.) Two out of these five questions had the average scores below 5. One of them was the request to read the Book of Mark before taking the test. The students gave themselves an average score of 4 points. They explained that they forgot or did not have time to read the entire book. The request for which they received the lowest score was regarding their attempts to share their faith to non-believers. As a team, they received a score of 1.8 on a scale from one to ten. They verbally explained that time, opportunity, and unpreparedness were the reasons why that they did not practice this request successfully.

A perfect score of five tasks for the self-evaluation is 50 points. Among the ten selected participants, five of them graded themselves above 25 points. The median score of the self-evaluation was 24.5. The highest score, 42 points, belonged to an elder female, who has been faithfully attending church, and has a strong desire to learn as well as to practice her faith.

To evaluate the entire training program, through ten questions, the students gave many positive feedbacks. They thought the course was helpful for them to have a better

understanding of Christ, as well as their roles as Christians, and the program had strengthened their faith and their relationship with God. Also, they had a stronger desire to share God's salvation to others. They strongly agreed that the training course should be taught to new believers. They gave an average of 9.4 points for this question.

The average score of ten evaluation questions was 7.1. The lowest score, 4.7, was given for Question Three, which asked "Did you find some answers to your theological questions?". This score was the only score below 5 points. The next lowest score was about the length and the difficulty of the material, which got a 5.1. For the last question regarding the usefulness of the course overall, they gave a score of 8.5. Table 5.3 below summarizes their rating average points regarding the course.

Table 5.3. Evaluation Rate

1. Did you gain more knowledge of Jesus Christ?	6.8
2. Did you gain more knowledge of Christian responsibilities?	5.7
3. Did you find some answers to your theological questions?	4.7
4. Did it strengthen your faith in God?	8.4
5. Do you have a better relationship with God?	7.7
6. Do you have a stronger desire to serve God through the church?	8.7
7. Do you have a stronger desire to witness for Christ?	6.2
8. Do you think this program is too long or difficult for new believers?	5.1
9. Do you think each Christian should take this training program?	9.4
10. Overall, did you find this course helpful for you?	8.5

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION**

#### **Summary**

Being a pastor for the VAUMC for a few years, the researcher had some ideas regarding the spiritual maturity of the congregation. Since the majority of them were new believers, she knew they had a lot to learn. She was debating on which topic to train them through the Doctor of Ministry program, such as learning how to witness to neighbors or strengthening marriage relationships, as many of them have been remarried. Seeing that the new believers at VAUMC have been learning the Bible diligently, but still have not firmly grasped fundamental Christian beliefs, the researcher was convinced that Christology would be a good topic for them to start learning Christian theology systematically. The hypothesis was that with a better understanding of God, new Christians will not only stay faithful but also become more active believers.

The researcher attempted to design a project that met both the spiritual need and the ability to learn of this particular congregation. She understood that it was just the beginning of a theological teaching process; therefore, she limited the content of the training course in order to achieve specific goals that she had set for the project. The Christians at VAUMC in Ohio had studied a five-lesson series of Christological catechesis from March through May of 2013. They also shared their religious opinions and theological understandings through six surveys, a final exam, and two forms of

evaluation. All the learning materials, a total of 203 questions, were created in multiple-choice format. The training program seemed to work effectively in some aspects.

The surveys helped the researchers to find out how accurate she understood other Vietnamese Christians thought of theological aspects such as the Trinity and the Church. The surveys revealed that she had a good understanding of their opinions. The surveys also motivated the students to explore more theology.

Based on the results from the pre-test and the final test, where the latter score was higher than the former one at about ten percent, it indicates that the students had gained a deeper theological understanding of Christology, although not much. The students understood more thoroughly who Jesus was, what he taught, as well as why they were worshiping him. Besides learning about Jesus, the students also had a better understanding of the universal Church, their own church, and the connection between Christ and them, the Church.

The evaluation reflected that the overall program was useful for the students spiritually. With a better understanding of Christ, their faith and relationship with God were renewed. They felt more committed in devotion, worship, and learning about their faith. In application, they had greater confidence to share their Christian beliefs to others. Overall, they believed that the training material would be helpful to any beginning theological learners like themselves to learn.

Regarding the learning method, the implementation was successful in giving the students a new experience in discovering theology. Learning through prepared lessons systematically helped them to absorb the contents of the program better. Catechism

taught in multiple-choice format urged them to become more proactive and independent thinkers. The learning method was simple to follow and lessons were repeated, so the students were able to remember and to understand the teachings better. They had more chances to engage in learning material and to share their own opinion and knowledge. The new learning method helped them to finish learning a theological training course that might have been difficult for them to complete alone.

There were more students who participated in the training program than originally anticipated. The students did not seem to be worn out by the course's requirements. On the contrary, they seemed to gain more interests in learning theology. There were a few students who did not seem excitedly engaged in taking the pre-tests. (They were the students who did not have a strong educational background.) The majority of the students participated fully and actively in the program. Often they made comments and were eager to know correct answers. While answering the surveys, the students recognized their limitation in understanding religious matters and wished to learn more theology. Some of the students said they wanted to restudy the handed-out lessons by themselves in order to better understand and to remember what they had learned. Overall, the program revealed to them their limited knowledge of faith and encouraged them to have a stronger desire to enhance their faith understanding. The evaluation confirmed their interest to participate in the program, as well as their desire for further study.

### **Reflection**

As revealed through the surveys, the results of the pre-tests agreed that Christological knowledge of the first-generation Vietnamese Christians in Ohio was

limited. It is good to recognize their limitations to know what to teach and how to teach them effectively. The researcher is glad that she did not make these new learners to feel pressured or hesitant. She plans to continue teaching them systematic theology, about the Holy Spirit and beyond, because there are still a lot of topics for them to learn.

Reflecting on the results, the difference between the average score of the pre-tests and the final test, 60% and 70% respectively, indicated that on one side there was some improvements in learning theology through catechism; on the other side, it revealed that the training program only had a limited effect. It is not simple for anyone, especially those who do not have a strong biblical background or a good educational experience, to remember what they have learned. The only chart of score range before and after the training in Chapter Five indicated that those who do not have ability to learn seemed to quickly forget what they have learned, even though the contents of the lesson were intentionally repeated for them to memorize what they learned better. The short memory of VAUMC students might also due to age or teaching style.

Regarding the latest possibility, the researcher did feel that if the number of participants had been less and the timeframe to teach had been longer, students would have had more time to finish pre-tests without pressure, and their teacher would have had more time to stress further aspects that she thought might be important for them to know. Thus, the training would have been more productive if there has been a smaller number of students and with a longer timeframe. However, due to their special circumstances, when their teacher, the researcher of this project, had two-point charge, they had to follow her schedule on Sundays. In the future, perhaps a different time or date might work better for them if they have the same number of students.

Regarding learning experience, when VAUMC students were not sure about a theological issue, they did not seek help from the Bible. Instead, they reasoned, leaned on tradition, or used their personal opinion to answer. This reflected their immaturity in biblical knowledge and spirituality. They had not distinguished crucial differences between common, moral, secular, and traditional perspectives from biblical perspectives. This could be improved if students continue to enhance their biblical knowledge through different types of Bible studies and practice to look up biblical references more often.

A wide range of results on the pre-tests (38-66) and the final test (42.5-97.5) among students' feedbacks reflected a strong correlation between their educational levels and their theological understandings. Those who had higher educational experience or ability got better results on their tests than others did. This is understandable and acceptable. A wide range of grades from self-evaluations (18-42 out of 50), however, revealed that not all of the students had the same level of interests in learning theology and applying biblical teachings. Regardless of their learning skills, students might have strong interests to learn, but not all of them wanted to put their heart and effort into practice what they have learned. It needs more than a good teaching method to motivate people to apply Bible teachings diligently.

Overall, the people at VAUMC were easy students to teach. They were not great independent students, but they were willing to follow directions. They liked to share what they had in their minds, although were not very curious to raise challenging questions.

The students had showed their interest and effort in enhancing theological knowledge for faith renewal. Their spirituality was lifted up during the implementation,

yet it did not seem to last long. Their interests and concerns were still about the reality in this world.

For the researcher, the project was helpful for her to have a better assessment of her parishioners regarding their faith and personal perspectives. She was able more accurately pinpoint how much they understood theology and how much they wanted to learn. It made it easier for her to know which areas of teachings she should focus on to strengthen the faith of her congregation.

Since the course's feedback suggests that material is helpful for new Christians to learn theology, it will be reused locally when needed. The researcher plans to make it available online for other Vietnamese, Christians or not, to use as a theological learning resource. Besides providing answer keys, she plans to add further explanation where needed. She also plans to create more theological lessons in the same format for VAUMC in Ohio and long-distance learners to expand their theological knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

Learning Christian theology is helpful in strengthening Christian faith in God. It enables people of all spiritual backgrounds to have a better understanding of God. Especially for new believers, learning theology systematically and concisely is important, for they need effective instruction to affirm their faith and to live out their faith. Catechism, therefore, can be a good way to teach theology to new believers.

It was not easy for people to grasp theology immediately, especially when they did not have a good biblical background. Also, age and ability to learn can be factors that

have a negative impact on learning. Class size and timeframe would affect the effectiveness of the training as well.

To first-generation Christians, tradition and reason seem to have strong influences on their worldviews and beliefs. A repetitious teaching method would help them to distinguish more clearly the differences between common secular perspectives and biblical theologies. Teaching theology repeatedly should be implemented through different approaches, so that people can be reminded of what they have learned in more refreshing ways. In addition to learning catechism, people should learn to use the Bible as the primary source for theological study. Bible study, is therefore, always important as a primary foundation for Christian beliefs.

For those who are involved in teaching theology to new believers, they should be well prepared in both work and spirit in order to be effective trainers. Not only do they need to understand the background and the culture of the students, they need to be creative and patient in order to reap good results.

Learning theology has positive impacts on Christian faith and relationship with God. Yet, theological knowledge can be easily forgotten if it does not become professed beliefs. Sometimes, faith understandings require time and efforts to finally grasp and to accept. Continuing education is therefore relevant. When faith is genuine and strong, it will not only stay in minds, it will surely show through daily actions.

**APPENDIX A**

**SYLLABUS**

## SYLLABUS

### Session I:

- Survey Assessment #1: Non-Christian viewpoints regarding Jesus Christ
- Brief lecture on the role of Jesus Christ in Christian belief.
- Introduce the course

### Session II:

- Result of Survey Assessment #1
- Survey Assessment #2: Students' viewpoints regarding God
- Pre-test One
- Lesson One: God

### Session III:

- Results of Survey Assessment #2 and Pre-test One
- Survey Assessment #3: Students' viewpoints regarding Jesus Christ
- Pre-test Two
- Lesson Two: The Life of Jesus Christ

### Session IV:

- Results of Survey Assessment #3 and Pre-test Two
- Survey Assessment #4: Students' knowledge regarding Jesus' teachings
- Pre-test of Lesson Three
- Lesson Three: The Teachings of Jesus Christ

### Session V:

- Results of Survey Assessment #4 and Pre-test Three
- Survey Assessment #5: Students' reflection on their theological knowledge

- Pre-test Four
- Lesson Four: Perplexed Theological Questions

Session VI:

- Results of Survey Assessment #5 and Pre-test Four
- Survey Assessment #6: Students' understanding of the Church
- Pre-test of Lesson Five
- Lesson Five: The Church
- Handout Assignment

Session VII:

- Results of Survey Assessment #6 and Pre-test Five
- Comprehensive Test
- Evaluations

Note: Each pre-test is the content of the lesson of the same week

**APPENDIX B**  
**LIST OF SURVEYS**

**Survey Assessment #1****Non-Christians' Viewpoints of Jesus Christ**

In your own opinion, choose one answer for each question below.

1. What percentage of non-Christian Vietnamese have never heard of God as the Trinity?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26%-50%
  - c. 51%-75%
  - d. 76%-100%
2. What percentage of non-Christian Vietnamese have never heard of the name of Jesus Christ?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26%-50%
  - c. 51%-75%
  - d. 76%-100%
3. What percentage of non-Christian Vietnamese have never read the Bible?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26%-50%
  - c. 51%-75%
  - d. 76%-100%

4. What percentage of non-Christian Vietnamese have never attended a church?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26%-50%
  - c. 51%-75%
  - d. 76%-100%
5. Through what source do non-Christian Vietnamese learn the most about Christian faith?
  - a. Reading material or public media
  - b. Oral tradition, culture or family
  - c. Church or the Bible
  - d. Other sources (friends, coincidence,...)
6. What do non-Christian Vietnamese think of Jesus Christ?
  - a. He is a famous religious leader like Buddha or Mohammed.
  - b. He is a divine person like an angel.
  - c. He is God.
  - d. Another view
7. Why do many non-Christian Vietnamese not believe in Jesus Christ?
  - a. No one tells them.
  - b. They want to keep their religions.
  - c. They do not believe Jesus is God.
  - d. Another reason

8. Do you think non-Christian Vietnamese would want to know more about Jesus?
  - a. Most likely
  - b. Maybe
  - c. Unlikely

**Survey Assessment #2****Christians' Viewpoints about God**

Choose the best answer for each question below.

1. What did you think of God before becoming a Christian?
  - a. The only true God
  - b. A powerful God like gods of other religions
  - c. Did not believe there was a God
2. Did you have a good understanding of the Trinity before becoming a Christian?
  - a. Never heard of it
  - b. Had some idea about it
  - c. Understood it quite well
3. Did you have a chance to read the Bible before becoming a Christian?
  - a. No, not at all
  - b. A little
  - c. A lot
4. How long did you go to the church before becoming a Christian?
  - a. 0-1 year
  - b. 1-3 years
  - c. More than three years

5. Why did you first decide to worship God?
  - a. To be blessed
  - b. To have the same religion as another family member
  - c. To have fellowship with others
  - d. To accept God as the only true God
  - e. Other reasons
6. Since becoming a Christian, how often do you read the Bible alone?
  - a. Every week
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Rarely
7. Since becoming a Christian, how often do you go to church?
  - a. Every week
  - b. Occasionally
  - c. Rarely
8. Do you know what to share with others non-Christians about God?
  - a. Yes, a lot
  - b. Some
  - c. Not really

**Survey Assessment #3****Christians' Viewpoints about Jesus Christ**

In your own opinion, choose one answer for each question below.

1. How often did you hear about Jesus Christ before becoming a Christian?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. A few times
  - c. A lot
2. How did you first hear about Jesus?
  - a. From learning resources (Bible, book, radio, television, etc)
  - b. From another believer
  - c. From church
  - d. From another source
3. How did you understand Jesus before becoming a Christian?
  - a. He is a famous religious leader like Buddha or Mohammed.
  - b. He is a powerful individual who heals and teaches well.
  - c. He is a divine person like an angel.
  - d. He is God.
  - e. Other
4. Did you know a lot of Christians before becoming a Christian?
  - a. None
  - b. A few
  - c. A lot

5. Are you the first Christian in your family?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. If no, has your Christian family member shared with you stories about Jesus Christ?
  - a. Yes, a lot
  - b. Yes, a little
  - c. No
7. Have you ever shared about Jesus Christ with others?
  - a. Yes, a lot
  - b. Yes, a little
  - c. No
8. Why do you think Vietnamese Christians are not bold in sharing the Gospel with others?
  - a. Do not know what to share
  - b. Do not know how to share
  - c. Feel hesitant to share
  - d. Do not have opportunities to share
  - e. Other reasons

**Survey Assessment #4****Christians' Viewpoints about Jesus Christ's Teachings**

In your own opinion, choose one answer for each question below.

1. Do you know which books in the Bible you can read about Jesus' teachings?
  - a. Yes, very clearly
  - b. Kind of
  - c. Not really
  
2. Do you know well Jesus' teachings about the Trinity?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Yes, quite well
  - c. No, just a little
  - d. Not really
  
3. Do you know well Jesus' teachings about practicing faith such as reading the Bible, praying, or fasting?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Yes, quite well
  - c. No, just a little
  - d. Not really
  
4. Do you know well Jesus' teachings about how to treat others?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Yes, quite well
  - c. No, just a little
  - d. Not really

5. Do you know well Jesus' teachings about the Church?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Yes, quite well
  - c. No, just a little
  - d. Not really
6. Do you think Jesus' teachings are very similar to other religious teachings?
  - a. Yes, almost the same
  - b. Some parts are the same
  - c. No, a lot of different
7. Do you think you have practiced what you have learned from Jesus' teachings well, so far?
  - a. Yes, a lot
  - b. A few
  - c. Almost none
8. Do you think Jesus' teachings are helpful to anyone who learns them?
  - a. Yes, definitely
  - b. I do not know
  - c. No, it depends on each individual

**Survey Assessment #5****Christians' Understandings of Theology**

In your own opinion, choose one answer for each question below.

1. Do you have a lot of questions about faith?
  - a. Yes, quite a lot.
  - b. Yes, some.
  - c. No question
2. Do you think you know well the Christian beliefs in general?
  - a. Yes, very well.
  - b. Kind of good.
  - c. Not really
3. Do you want to have a better understanding of theology?
  - a. Yes, very much.
  - b. It does not matter
  - c. No
4. Are there a lot of people that ask you about your faith?
  - a. Yes, a lot.
  - b. Sometimes
  - c. No

5. Do you think you know what to answer when you are asked questions about your faith?
  - a. Yes
  - b. Maybe
  - c. Not really
6. Why do think people do not raise questions about faith?
  - a. They do not care about the afterlife.
  - b. They do not know whom to ask.
  - c. They hesitate to ask.
  - d. Another reason
7. Why do think having knowledge about faith is important?
  - a. To know what is true or right
  - b. Not to lose faith
  - c. To help others to accept the truth
  - d. All of the above
8. Do you think today's people care about spirituality?
  - a. Yes, very much.
  - b. No, very little.
  - c. Yes, but they do not know where to get the answer.

**Survey Assessment #6****Christians' Understandings of the Church**

In your own opinion, choose one answer for each question below.

1. Do you know well the history of the Church?
  - a. Yes, quite well
  - b. Some
  - c. Not really
2. Do you know how the Church was first formed?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Kind of
  - c. Not really
3. Do you clearly know the major differences between Christianity and other religions?
  - a. Yes, very well
  - b. Kind of
  - c. Not really
4. Do you have a good knowledge about the institution of the Church worldwide?
  - a. Yes, quite well
  - b. No, just a little
  - c. Not really
5. Do you have a good knowledge about the ministries of the Church?
  - a. Yes, quite well
  - b. No, just a little
  - c. Not really

6. Are you an active member of your local church?
  - a. Yes, I am
  - b. Yes, somewhat
  - c. Not really
7. Do you know well the basic differences or similarities between your church and other churches?
  - a. Yes, very much
  - b. Yes, some of them
  - c. No, not really
8. Do you know well the ministries of your local church?
  - a. Yes, quite clearly
  - b. Yes, some of them
  - c. Not much

**APPENDIX C**  
**LIST OF LESSONS**

**Lesson One: God**

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. Who is God? (Gen. 1:1)
  - a. The most powerful person
  - b. The Creator
  - c. The most powerful god
  - d. One of the gods
  
2. Does God have a name? (Exo. 6:2-3)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Not sure
  
3. What is God's name? (Exo. 6:2-3)
  - a. Jesus Christ
  - b. Jehovah
  - c. Another name
  - d. No name
  
4. How did God come into being? (Exo. 3:14)
  - a. From another god
  - b. From God's parents
  - c. Self-existed
  - d. Unknown

5. Is God still alive? (Ps. 90:2)
  - a. No, God died a long time ago.
  - b. No, God has been dead since the first century.
  - c. Yes, God is alive and lives forever.
6. Why do we not see God? (John 4:24; Exo. 33:20)
  - a. Because God is spirit
  - b. Because God is too glorious
  - c. Because God does not want humans to see God
  - d. Both a and b
7. What does God know? (Ps. 11:4)
  - a. Everything in the past
  - b. Everything in the present
  - c. All thoughts, words, and deeds
  - d. Everything in the past, present and future
8. What is God able to do? (Matt. 19:26)
  - a. All things that humans can do
  - b. God is able to do everything
  - c. There are some things God is not able to do
9. What are the characteristics of God? (Lev. 19:2 b; Ps. 11:7 b, 9:8; 1 John 4:8 b; John 3:16; John 3:33; Ps 89:34; Rom. 8:32)
  - a. Holy, righteous, loving, honest, faithful, good
  - b. Inconsistent, imperfect, indifferent
  - c. Evil, selfish, hatred

10. Who is actually the God of Christianity? (Gen. 1:1-2; Col. 1:12-16)

- a. God the Father
- b. Jesus Christ
- c. The Holy Spirit
- d. All three above

11. When we say that we worship God, whom do we worship? (Matt. 28:19)

- a. One God with three names
- b. One God in three persons
- c. Three distinct Gods

12. What is correct about the Christian God?

- a. God is commonly known as the Trinity
- b. Three divine persons are co-eternal and co-equal
- c. Three divine persons have the same characteristics, abilities, and plans
- d. All of the above

13. How do humans know of God's existence? (Ps. 19:1, 139:14; Gen. 1:1; John 1:18;

Acts 15:12; 1 Pet. 2:12)

- a. Through religions, traditions, superstitions
- b. Through legends, books, cultures
- c. Through nature, human conscience, the Bible, Jesus Christ, God's miracles, the Church, or human lives transformed by the Holy Spirit
- d. All of the above

14. Are there other true gods? (Isa. 43:11)

- a. Yes, gods of other cultures and religions are also true gods.
- b. No, there are no other true gods.
- c. We do not know.

15. What is the main point of this lesson?

- a. To know more clearly who God is
- b. To know more clearly God's works
- c. To know how to worship God properly

## Lesson Two: Jesus' Life

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. Who is Jesus? (John 1:1-3; John 10:30)
  - a. The greatest king of the Jews
  - b. The founder of Christianity
  - c. The Son of God, and is God himself
  - d. One of heavenly beings
  - e. All of the above
2. How did Jesus come to being? (John 3:16)
  - a. Self-existed
  - b. He was created by God the Father
  - c. He was born by God the Father
  - d. He was born by his parents
  - e. Unknown
3. When did Jesus exist? (Col. 1:15-17)
  - a. Before creation
  - b. Since the first century
  - c. At another period of time
4. Did Jesus have biological parents? (Luke 2:4-6, 20)
  - a. No
  - b. Father
  - c. Mother
  - d. Both parents

5. How did Jesus' mother become pregnant with him? (Luke 1:34-35)
  - a. Through implant
  - b. Through natural conception
  - c. By the Holy Spirit
  - d. By another way
6. When was Jesus born on the earth? (Matt 2:1)
  - a. About 4000 years ago
  - b. About 2000 years ago
  - c. At another period of time
7. In which country was Jesus born? (Luke 2:4-7)
  - a. U.S.
  - b. Israel
  - c. Egypt
  - d. Another country
8. How many years did Jesus live on the earth? (Luke 3:23)
  - a. About 45 years
  - b. About 33 years
  - c. Another number of years
  - d. Unknown

9. What is not right about Jesus?

- a. He never sins
- b. He had no human needs as a normal person
- c. He knows everything
- d. All of the above

10. What crucial work did Jesus do? (Matt. 4:23; 20:18-19)

- a. Teach
- b. Perform miracles
- c. Die for humanity
- d. All of the above

11. Did Jesus have superior physical powers compared to a normal person?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

12. Did Jesus have a super natural power more than a normal person?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

13. What kind of powers does Jesus have that indicates that he is God?

- a. Over sickness
- b. Over nature
- c. Over the devil
- d. Over death
- e. All of the above

14. What did Jesus do that made him known as the Savior of human kind? (Col. 1:20; 1 Tim. 1:15)

- a. Healed the sick
- b. Brought freedom to the oppressed
- c. Died for all sinners
- d. Another task

15. How did Jesus die?

- a. Natural death
- b. Was nailed on the cross
- c. Was assassinated
- d. Died by another cause
- e. Unknown

16. Who killed Jesus?

- a. One of his disciples
- b. The contemporary Jewish leaders through the Roman government
- c. Governor Pilate
- d. Unknown

17. Did Jesus know in advance that he would be killed? (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

18. Did Jesus really die physically? (Matt. 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-20; Luke 24:1-55; John 20:1-21)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

19. Did Jesus resurrect from the dead?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

20. When did Jesus resurrect from the dead?

- a. On the third day after death
- b. Three days after death
- c. After another period of time
- d. Unknown

21. Has anyone seen the risen Jesus? (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20; 1 Cor. 15:6)

- a. No one
- b. His mother
- c. The Twelve Disciples
- d. More than five hundred people

22. After Jesus rose again, how many times did people see him? (1 Cor. 15:4-8)

- a. One time
- b. Two times
- c. Several times

23. How long did Jesus stay on earth after the resurrection? (Acts 1:3)

- a. Ten days
- b. Forty days
- c. A different amount of time
- d. Unknown

24. What happened to Jesus after the resurrection? (Acts 1:9)

- a. Died again
- b. Ascended to heaven
- c. Disappeared
- d. Unknown

25. Did Jesus plan to return to this world? (John 14:2-3; Matt. 24:30-31)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

26. While living on the earth, did Jesus know when He will return to this earth? (Matt.

24:36)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unknown

27. Why will Jesus return to this earth? (John 14:3; Rev. 19:19-21)

- a. Unknown
- b. Defeat all the powers of the darkness
- c. Bring all believers to heaven
- d. Both b and c

28. What is the main point of this lesson?

- a. To know who Jesus Christ is
- b. To know what Jesus taught
- c. To know the miraculous things that Jesus did

### **Lesson Three: Jesus' Teachings**

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. What did Jesus teach about God the Father? (John 3:16; Mark 12:29-30)
  - a. God sent Jesus to the world to save the world from eternal death.
  - b. We should love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
  - c. God is the greatest God among all gods.
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. All a-c
2. What did Jesus teach about the Holy Spirit? (John 14:26)
  - a. The Holy Spirit is God's soul.
  - b. The Holy Spirit dwells in the life of the believers.
  - c. The Holy Spirit guides, comforts, strengthens, and helps the believers.
  - d. Both b and c
  - e. All a-c
3. What did Jesus teach about himself? (Mark 10:45; John 5:22, 14:3, 16:28)
  - a. He came from heaven.
  - b. He will die for humanity.
  - c. He will return to this earth.
  - d. He will judge everyone on the Judgment Day.
  - e. All of the above

4. What did Jesus claim regarding himself? (Matt 16:27; John 3:16, 10:30, 14:6)
  - a. He is the only Son of God.
  - b. He is Son of Man.
  - c. He is the only way to heaven.
  - d. He is God.
  - e. All of the above
5. What did Jesus teach regarding parents? (Mark 10:19)
  - a. Respect, love and take care of them
  - b. Live with them all your life
  - c. Worship them when they die
  - d. Provide them enough money
6. What did Jesus teach regarding marriage?
  - a. Feel free to get married regardless of gender
  - b. Feel free to get married regardless of age
  - c. Feel free to get married regardless of religion
  - d. All of the above is untrue
7. What did Jesus teach regarding divorce? (Matt. 5:32)
  - a. Feel free to divorce.
  - b. Divorce when there is no reconciliation.
  - c. Divorce only when there is adultery.
  - d. Divorce is acceptable as long as the civil law approves.

8. What did Jesus teach regarding enemies? (Matt. 5:44)

- a. Stay away from them
- b. Treat them as how they treat you
- c. Love them
- d. Follow your heart

9. What did Jesus teach regarding money? (Matt. 19:33)

- a. Make as much money as we can
- b. Money can be a great obstacle for the rich to have eternal life.
- c. Wealth is a blessing that God always grants to believers.
- d. Both b and c

10. What did Jesus teach regarding sacraments? (Matt. 28:19 ; Luke 22:19)

- a. Baptize believers in the name of the Trinity
- b. Keep the Eucharist
- c. Keep all sacraments defined by the church's leaders
- d. Celebrate Easter and Christmas
- e. Both a and b
- f. All a-d

11. What did Jesus teach regarding worship? (John 4:23)

- a. Worship in the Spirit and in truth
- b. Worship with reverence with the congregation
- c. It is a sin to skip attending church for any reason.
- d. Both a and b

12. What did Jesus teach regarding praying? (Luke 18:1; John 14:13-14 ; Matt. 21:22)

- a. Pray persistently and sincerely
- b. Pray with faith in Jesus' name
- c. Praying goes parallel with fasting
- d. Both a and b
- e. All a-c

13. What did Jesus teach regarding fasting? (Matt. 6:16-18)

- a. Do not boast about fasting
- b. Fast periodically
- c. Fast is an act of free will
- d. Fast when you want your prayers to be granted

14. What did Jesus teach regarding the end of the world? (Matt. 24:1-30)

- a. It will never happen
- b. It will literally happen
- c. It has spiritually happened

15. What did Jesus teach regarding heaven? (John 14:1-3)

- a. It is God's house - where the believers will go to live after death.
- b. It will be a new world on this earth after Jesus' second coming.
- c. It is a spiritual world where the believers will feel happy.

16. What are the two greatest commandments according to Jesus? (Matt. 22:37-39)

- a. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbors as yourself
- b. Worship God and do not sin
- c. Be good and fast often
- d. Do charities and share the Good News

17. What was Jesus' final teaching to his disciples (Matt. 28:19-20)?

- a. Love one another
- b. Make disciples throughout the world
- c. Be faithful to death
- d. Be filled with the Holy Spirit

18. What is the main point of this lesson?

- a. Christian beliefs regarding Jesus Christ
- b. Jesus' teachings regarding important topics
- c. The works of Jesus
- d. Well-known stories in the Bible

### Lesson Four: Perplexed Theological Questions

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. Where did the universe, every plant, every animal, and human originally come from?  
(Gen. 1)
  - a. Self-existed
  - b. Results of nature
  - c. God created them
  - d. Some unknown gods created them
2. Why do people die? (Gen. 2:16-17)
  - a. Because the human body cannot be sustained forever
  - b. Because man sinned against God
  - c. Because people do not want to live forever
  - d. Because of various reasons
3. What happens immediately after someone dies? (Heb. 9:27)
  - a. The end; there is nothing more
  - b. Immediately live the next life on earth
  - c. Stay temporarily in a place not of this world awaiting final judgment
  - d. Start living eternally in heaven or hell
4. How many lives does a person have? (Heb. 9:27-28)
  - a. One: this world
  - b. Two: this life and eternal life after this life
  - c. Many: past lives, this life, and many more lives after
  - d. It is different based on one's belief or lifestyle

5. Who decides the fate of human beings in the next life? (2 Tim. 4:1)
  - a. Nobody makes the decision, because there is no life after this life.
  - b. Nobody makes the decision. Human souls automatically transcend to the next life.
  - c. Jesus decides.
  - d. The gods of each religion will decide the fate of their own believers.
6. Human fate in the next life is based on what ground in this life? (John 3:16)
  - a. The work of human
  - b. The heart of human
  - c. The lifestyle of human
  - d. Human belief in the true God
  - e. All of the above
7. Who was both God and human while living on the earth? (John 1:1 & 11a)
  - a. No one
  - b. The persons that human worships such as Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed
  - c. Many other gods
  - d. Only Jesus
8. Why did Jesus Christ have to die for humankind? (Rom. 3:23, 6:23, Heb. 9:22)
  - a. All humans have sinned
  - b. The consequence of sin is death
  - c. No one can save himself/herself or others
  - d. All of the above

9. How is a sinner saved by Jesus? (Rom. 10:9)

- By believing that Jesus is God
- Stop doing wrong things
- By becoming an active believer
- Through word of mouth, confessing that he/she is guilty, believing that Jesus died for him/her, and faithfully worshipping the Triune God.
- All of the above

10. What will the believer have that the unbeliever does not have? (Ps. 128:1-5, John 3:36, Rom. 6:4)

- More blessings in this life
- Spiritual transformation
- Eternal life in heaven
- All of the above

11. Will all those who were born before Jesus' time be in heaven? (Ecc. 11:9)

- Yes, all will.
- No, only those who do good and reject evil will.
- No, none of them will.
- Jesus will decide.

12. After Jesus' birth, there are those who have never heard of salvation through Jesus, and they do not believe in God. Will they be in heaven? (Rom. 1:19-20)

- Yes, all will.
- No, no one will.
- Jesus will decide.

13. After Jesus' birth, there are those who have never heard of salvation through Jesus,

but they believe in God. Will they be in heaven? (Ecc. 11:9)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

14. There are those who do not know Jesus, but believe and worship God and other gods.

Will they be in heaven? (Exo. 20:2-5)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

15. There are those who listen to salvation through Jesus but do not believe him, although

they believe and worship God. Will they be in heaven? (John 1:10-12; 8:24)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. Yes, some will.
- c. No, no one will.
- d. Jesus will decide.

16. There are people who live a moral life in this world, and do not worship any god, will

they be in heaven? (Rom. 3:20; John 14:6)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. Maybe some will.
- c. No, no one will.
- d. Jesus will decide.

17. For the fetus, the deceased infants, or the mentally ill, will they be in heaven?

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

18. After this life, will people have another chance to convert to faith? (Heb. 10:26-27)

- a. No
- b. Maybe
- c. Certainly

19. What is the main point of this lesson?

- a. Christian beliefs in eternal life
- b. The salvation of God through Jesus
- c. Apocalyptic beliefs

## Lesson Five: The Church

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. What is the Church?
  - a. Where believers worship God
  - b. A group of believers who worships God together
  - c. Members of all churches in the world
  - d. The community of Christians throughout all ages
2. How many Christian churches are there?
  - a. Only one global church
  - b. Three main churches
  - c. Many different churches
3. What is the official name of the Christian Church?
  - a. Church of Christ
  - b. The United Methodist Church
  - c. Another name
  - d. No official name
4. Where was the Church formed?
  - a. In Israel
  - b. In the United States
  - c. In another country

5. When was the Church formed?
  - a. Since the creation
  - b. In the first century
  - c. In the fourth century
  - d. At another time
6. What is the religion of the Church?
  - a. Catholic
  - b. Christianity
  - c. Protestant
  - d. Orthodox
7. What are the main groups of Christianity?
  - a. Catholic and Protestant
  - b. Catholic and Orthodox
  - c. Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant
  - d. Answer c and more groups
8. To which group does our local church belong?
  - a. Catholic
  - b. Orthodox
  - c. Protestant
9. When was the Protestant Church formed?
  - a. In the first century
  - b. In the fourth century
  - c. In the 16th century

10. Where did the Protestant Church start?

- a. In the Middle East
- b. Europe
- c. North America
- d. Another region

11. What was the main reason that the Protestant Church formed?

- a. As a result of a church revival
- b. Disputes over power in church leadership
- c. There were some differences in theology against the Catholic Church's beliefs
- d. Another reason

12. Do all Christians have the same sacraments?

- a. Yes, they do.
- b. No, every church group has different forms of sacraments.
- c. No, every local church has its own sacraments.

13. Do all Christians have the same Bible?

- a. Yes, they do.
- b. No, but every church group has the same Bible.
- c. No, each local church chooses its own Bible.

14. Do all Christians have a top leader or committee?

- a. Yes, they do.
- b. No, each church group has its own leadership.
- c. No, each local church has its own leadership.

15. Do all Evangelical Christians have the same superior church leader?

- a. Yes, they do.
- b. No, but there is the highest leadership committee.
- c. No, there is no superior leader or committee.

16. Is it correct that the Protestant Church has independent denominations?

- a. Yes, it is.
- b. No, there are different denominations but they work together.
- c. No, there are many names, but under one united leadership.

17. To which denomination does our local church belong?

- a. Church of Christ
- b. The Evangelical Church of North America
- c. The Evangelical Church of Vietnam
- d. Another denomination

18. What are the basic practices of the Christian faith?

- a. Keep weekly corporate worship, read the Bible, and pray daily
- b. Regularly fast and do charity
- c. Both a and b
- d. Each church group has different practices

19. What is the most important commission that Jesus commanded the church to do?

- a. Love God and love people
- b. Make disciples around the world
- c. Stay faithful to God
- d. Do good and reject evil

20. What is the main point of this lesson?

- a. Learn the key themes in the Bible
- b. Enhance basic understanding of the Church
- c. Learn about the ministries of the Church

**APPENDIX D**  
**FINAL ASSIGNMENT**

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT**

Complete the following tasks within the next two weeks.

1. Read the book of Mark
2. Pray at least 15 minutes everyday
3. Pray for a person with whom you want to share your faith
4. Share your Christian faith to the person prayed for above
5. Review the lessons for the final exam

**APPENDIX E**

**FINAL EXAM**

**FINAL EXAM**

Choose the most correct answer for each question below.

1. Who is God? (Gen. 1:1)
  - a. The most powerful person
  - b. The Creator
  - c. The most powerful god
  - d. One of the gods
2. How did God come into being? (Exo. 3:14)
  - a. From another god
  - b. From God's parents
  - c. Self-existed
  - d. Unknown
3. Why do we not see God? (John 4:24; Exo. 33:20)
  - a. Because God is spirit
  - b. Because God is too holy
  - c. Because God does not like to meet humans
  - d. Both a and b

4. How do humans know of God's existence? (Ps. 19:1, 139:14; Gen. 1:1; John 1:18; Acts 15:12; 1 Pet. 2:12)
  - a. Through religions, traditions, superstitions
  - b. Through legends, books, cultures
  - c. Through nature, human conscience, the Bible, Jesus Christ, God's miracles, lives transformed by the Holy Spirit
  - d. All of the above
5. When we say that we worship God, whom do we worship? (Matt. 28:19)
  - a. One God with three names
  - b. One God in three persons
  - c. Three separate Gods
6. What is God's name? (Exo. 6:2-3)
  - a. Jesus Christ
  - b. Jehovah
  - c. Another name
  - d. No name
7. Who is the Holy Spirit? (John 14:26)
  - a. The Holy Spirit is God's soul.
  - b. The Holy Spirit dwells in the life of the believers.
  - c. The Holy Spirit guides, comforts, strengthens, and helps the believers.
  - d. Both b and c
  - e. All a-c

8. Who is Jesus? (John 1:1-3; John 10:30)

- a. The greatest king of the Jews
- b. The founder of Christianity
- c. The Son of God, and is God himself
- d. One of heavenly beings
- e. All of the above

9. How did Jesus come to being? (John 3:16)

- a. Self-existed
- b. He was created by God the Father
- c. He was born by God the Father
- d. He was born by his parents
- e. Unknown

10. When did Jesus exist? (Col. 1:15-17)

- a. Before creation
- b. Since the first century
- c. At another period of time

11. What kind of powers does Jesus have that indicates that he is God?

- a. Over sickness
- b. Over nature
- c. Over the devil
- d. Over death
- e. All of the above

12. What did Jesus do that made him known as the Savior of human kind? (Col. 1:20; 1

Tim. 1:15)

- a. Healed the sick
- b. Brought freedom to the oppressed
- c. Died for all sinners
- d. Another task

13. What did Jesus teach about himself? (Mark 10:45; John 5:22, 14:3, 16:28)

- a. He came from heaven.
- b. He died for humanity.
- c. He will return to this earth.
- d. He will judge everyone on the Judgment Day.
- e. All of the above

14. What did Jesus claim regarding himself? (Matt 16:27; John 3:16, 10:30, 14:6)

- a. He is the only Son of God.
- b. He is Son of Man.
- c. He is the only way to heaven.
- d. He is God.
- e. All of the above

15. What did Jesus teach regarding divorce? (Matt. 5:32)

- a. Feel free to divorce.
- b. Divorce when there is reconciliation.
- c. Divorce only when there is adultery.
- d. Divorce is acceptable as long as the civil law approves.

16. What did Jesus teach regarding money? (Matt. 19:33)

- a. Make as much money as we can
- b. Money can be a great obstacle for the rich to have eternal life.
- c. Wealth is a blessing that God always grants to believers.
- d. Both b and c

17. What did Jesus teach regarding worship? (John 4:23)

- a. Worship in the Spirit and in truth
- b. Worship with reverence with the congregation
- c. It is a sin to skip attending church for any reason.
- d. Both a and b

18. What did Jesus teach regarding praying? (Luke 18:1; John 14:13-14 ; Matt. 21:22)

- a. Pray persistently and sincerely
- b. Pray with faith in Jesus' name
- c. Praying goes parallel with fasting
- d. Both a and b
- e. All a-c

19. What did Jesus teach regarding fasting? (Matt. 6:16-18)

- a. Do not boast about fasting
- b. Fast periodically
- c. Fasting is an act of free will
- d. Fast when you want your prayers to be granted

20. What did Jesus teach regarding the end of the world? (Matt. 24:1-30)

- a. It will never happen
- b. It will literally happen
- c. It has spiritually happened

21. Why do people die? (Gen. 2:16-17)

- a. Because the human body cannot work forever
- b. Because man sinned against God
- c. Because people do not want to live forever
- d. Because one or more other reasons

22. What happens immediately after someone dies? (Heb. 9:27)

- a. The end; there is nothing more
- b. Immediately live the next life on earth
- c. Stay temporarily in a place not of this world awaiting final judgment
- d. Start living eternally in heaven or hell

23. How many lives does a person have? (Heb. 9:27-28)

- a. One: this world
- b. Two: this life and eternal life after this life
- c. Many: past lives, this life, and many more lives after
- d. It is different due to one's belief or lifestyle

24. Human fate in the next life based on what ground in this life? (John 3:16)

- a. The work of human
- b. The heart of human
- c. The lifestyle of human
- d. Human belief in the true God
- e. All of the above

25. How is a sinner saved by Jesus? (Rom. 10:9)

- a. By believing that Jesus is God
- b. Stop doing wrong things
- c. By becoming an active believer
- d. Through word of mouth, confessing that he/she is guilty, believing that Jesus died for him/her, and faithfully worshipping the Triune God.
- e. All of the above

26. What will the believer have that the unbeliever does not have? (Ps. 128:1-5, John 3:36, Rom. 6:4)

- a. More blessings in this life
- b. Spiritual transformation
- c. Eternal life in heaven
- d. All of the above

27. After Jesus' birth, there are those who have never heard of salvation through Jesus, and they do not believe in God. Will they be in heaven? (Rom. 1:19-20)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

28. After Jesus' birth, there are those who have never heard of salvation through Jesus, but they believe in God. Will they be in heaven? (Ecc. 11:9)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

29. There are those who do not know Jesus, and believe and worship God and other gods. Will they be in heaven? (Exo. 20:2-5)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. No, no one will.
- c. Jesus will decide.

30. There are those who listen to salvation through Jesus but do not believe him, although they believe and worship God. Will they be in heaven? (John 1:10-12; 8:24)

- a. Yes, all will.
- b. Yes, some will.
- c. No, no one will.
- d. Jesus will decide.

31. There are people who live a moral life in this world, and do not worship anyone, will they be in heaven? (Rom. 3:20; John 14:6)

- Yes, all will.
- Maybe some will.
- No, no one will.

32. After this life, will people have another chance to convert to faith? (Heb. 10:26-27)

- No
- Maybe
- Certainly

33. How many Christian churches there are?

- Only one global church
- Three main churches
- Many different churches

34. What is the official name of the Christian Church?

- Church of Christ
- The United Methodist Church
- Another name
- No official name

35. What is the religion of the Church?

- Catholic
- Christianity
- Protestant
- Orthodox

36. What was the main reason that the Protestant churches formed?

- As a result of a church revival
- Disputes over power in church leadership
- There were some differences in theology against the Catholic Church's beliefs
- Another reason

37. Do all Christians have the same Bible?

- Yes, they do.
- No, but every church group has the same Bible.
- No, each local church chooses its own Bible.

38. Is it correct that the Protestant Church has independent denominations?

- Yes, it is.
- No, there are different denominations but they work together.
- No, there are many names, but only one common leadership.

39. To which denomination does our local church belong?

- Church of Christ
- The Evangelical Church of North America
- The Evangelical Church of Vietnam
- Another denomination

40. What is the most important commission that Jesus commanded the church to do?

- Love God and love people
- Make disciples around the world
- Stay faithful to God
- Do good and reject evil

**APPENDIX F**  
**EVALUATION FORMS**

**Self-Evaluation**

Please rate each question on the scale of 1-10.

1 for strongly disagree; 10 for strongly agree.

1. Did you read the entire book of the Gospel of Mark for the past two weeks?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Did you pray 15-minutes every day for the past two weeks?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

3. Did you pray for the person to whom you wanted to witness?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

4. Did you share your Christian faith to the person you prayed for?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

5. Did you make time to review the lessons?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

### **Class Evaluation**

To reflect on the training program, rate each question on the scale of 1-10.

1 for strongly disagree; 10 for strongly agree.

1. Did you gain more knowledge of Jesus Christ?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Did you gain more knowledge of Christian responsibilities?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

3. Did you find some answers to your theological questions?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

4. Did it strengthen your faith in God?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

5. Do you have a better relationship with God?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

6. Do you have a stronger desire to serve God through the church?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

7. Do you have a stronger desire to witness for Christ?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

8. Do you think this program is too long or difficult for new believers?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

9. Do you think each Christian should take this training program?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

10. Overall, did you find this course helpful for you?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**APPENDIX G**  
**ANSWER KEYS**

**Answer Keys of Lesson One**

1. b	2. a	3. b	4. c	5. c
6. d	7. d	8. b	9. a	10. d
11. b	12. d	13. c	14. b	15. a

**Answer Keys of Lesson Two**

1. c	2. c	3. a	4. c	5. c
6. b	7. b	8. b	9. b	10. d
11. b	12. a	13. e	14. c	15. b
16. b	17. a	18. a	19. a	20. a
21. d	22. c	23. b	24. b	25. a
26. b	27. d	28. a		

**Answer Keys of Lesson Three**

1. d	2. d	3. e	4. e	5. a
6. d	7. c	8. c	9. b	10. e
11. a	12. d	13. a	14. b	15. a
16. a	17. b	18. b		

**Answer Keys of Lesson Four**

1. c	2. b	3. c	4. b	5. c
6. d	7. d	8. d	9. d	10. d
11. d	12. b	13. c	14. c	15. c
16. c	17. c	18. a	19. a	

**Answer Keys of Lesson Five**

1. d	2. a	3. d	4. a	5. b
6. b	7. c	8. c	9. c	10. b
11. c	12. b	13. b	14. b	15. c
16. a	17. d	18. a	19. b	20. b

**Answer Keys of Final Exam**

1. b	2. c	3. d	4. c	5. b
6. b	7. d	8. c	9. c	10. a
11. e	12. c	13. e	14. e	15. c
16. b	17. a	18. d	19. a	20. b
21. b	22. c	23. b	24. d	25. d
26. d	27. b	28. c	29. c	30. b
31. b	32. a	33. a	34. d	35. b
36. c	37. b	38. a	39. d	40. b

**APPENDIX H**  
**CHƯƠNG TRÌNH MÔN HỌC**

## CHƯƠNG TRÌNH MÔN HỌC

### Phần I:

- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #1: Quan Điểm của Người Việt Chưa Tin Chúa về Đức Chúa Jesus Christ
- Bài dạy ngắn về vai trò của Đức Chúa Jesus Christ trong niềm tin Cơ-đốc
- Giới thiệu về lớp học

### Phần II:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #1
- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #2: Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân về Đức Chúa Trời
- Bài Kiểm Tra Một
- Bài Học Một: Đức Chúa Trời

### Phần III:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #2 và Bài Kiểm Tra Một
- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #3: Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân về Đức Chúa Jesus Christ
- Bài Kiểm Tra Hai
- Bài Học Hai: Cuộc Đời của Đức Chúa Jesus Christ

### Phần IV:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #3 và Bài Kiểm Tra Hai
- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #4: Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân về các Lời Dạy của Đức Chúa Jesus Christ
- Bài Kiểm Tra Ba
- Bài Học Ba: Các Lời Dạy của Đức Chúa Jesus Christ

Phần V:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #4 và Bài Kiểm Tra Ba
- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #5: Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân về Kiến Thức Thần Học
- Bài Kiểm Tra Bốn
- Bài Học Bốn: Những Câu Hỏi Khó về Thần Học

Phần VI:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #5 và Bài Kiểm Tra Bốn
- Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #6: Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân về Hội Thánh
- Bài Kiểm Tra Năm
- Bài Học Năm: Hội Thánh
- Bài tập

Phần VII:

- Kết quả của Tham Khảo Ý Kiến #6 và Bài Kiểm Tra Năm
- Thi cuối khóa
- Đánh giá lớp học

Lưu ý: Mỗi bài kiểm tra là nội dung của bài học của tuần đó.

**APPENDIX I**  
**PHẦN THAM KHẢO Ý KIẾN**

### Tham Khảo Ý Kiến # 1

#### Quan Điểm của Người Việt Chưa Tin Chúa về Đức Chúa Jesus Christ

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bao nhiêu phần trăm người Việt chưa tin Chúa chưa bao giờ nghe nói về Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26% -50%
  - c. 51% -75%
  - d. 76-100%
2. Bao nhiêu phần trăm người Việt chưa tin Chúa chưa bao giờ nghe tên của Chúa Jesus?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26% -50%
  - c. 51% -75%
  - d. 76-100%
3. Bao nhiêu phần trăm người Việt chưa tin Chúa chưa bao giờ đọc Kinh Thánh?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26% -50%
  - c. 51% -75%
  - d. 76-100%

4. Bao nhiêu phần trăm người Việt chưa tin Chúa chưa bao giờ đi nhà thờ?
  - a. 0-25%
  - b. 26% -50%
  - c. 51% -75%
  - d. 76-100%
5. Thông qua nguồn nào người Việt chưa tin Chúa biết nhiều nhất về Chúa Jesus?
  - a. Đọc tài liệu hoặc các phương tiện truyền thông công cộng
  - b. Truyền thống, văn hóa, hoặc gia đình
  - c. Giáo Hội hay Kinh Thánh
  - d. Các nguồn khác (bạn bè, sự trùng hợp, ...)
6. Người Việt chưa tin Chúa nghĩ gì về Chúa Jesus Christ?
  - a. Ngài là một nhà lãnh đạo tôn giáo nổi tiếng như Đức Phật hoặc Mohammed.
  - b. Ngài là một thiên thần giống như thiên sứ.
  - c. Ngài là Thiên Chúa.
  - d. Một quan niệm khác
7. Tại sao nhiều người Việt Nam không tin thờ Chúa Jesus Christ?
  - a. Không ai nói cho họ biết.
  - b. Họ muốn giữ tôn giáo của họ.
  - c. Họ không tin rằng Chúa Jesus là Thiên Chúa.
  - d. Lý do khác

8. Bạn có nghĩ rằng nhiều người Việt chưa tin Chúa muốn biết thêm về Chúa Jesus Christ?

- a. Rất có thể
- b. Có thể
- c. Không hẳn

## Tham Khảo Ý Kiến # 2

### Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân (CĐN) về Đức Chúa Trời (ĐCT)

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bạn nghĩ gì về ĐCT trước khi trở thành một CĐN?
  - a. Chân thần duy nhất
  - b. Một thần uy quyền như thần của các tôn giáo khác
  - c. Không tin có một Thiên Chúa
2. Bạn có một sự hiểu biết tốt về ĐCT Ba Ngôi trước khi trở thành một CĐN không?
  - a. Chưa bao giờ nghe nói về điều này
  - b. Có một số kiến thức về điều này
  - c. Hiểu khá nhiều điều này
3. Bạn đã có cơ hội đọc Kinh Thánh trước khi trở thành một CĐN?
  - a. Không
  - b. Có một chút ít
  - c. Rất nhiều
4. Bạn đã đi nhà thờ được bao lâu trước khi trở thành một CĐN?
  - a. 0-1 năm
  - b. 1-3 năm
  - c. Hơn ba năm

5. Vì sao bạn đã quyết định để tin thờ ĐCT?
  - a. Để được phuort
  - b. Để có cùng tôn giáo với thành viên trong gia đình
  - c. Để có sự thông công với người khác
  - d. Để tin nhận ĐCT là chân thàn duy nhất
  - e. Những lý do khác
6. Kể từ khi trở thành một CĐN, bạn đọc Kinh Thánh một mình thường xuyên không?
  - a. Mỗi tuần
  - b. Thỉnh thoảng
  - c. Không thực sự đọc
7. Kể từ khi trở thành một CĐN, bạn có đi nhóm thường xuyên không?
  - a. Mỗi tuần
  - b. Thỉnh thoảng
  - c. Không nhiều
8. Bạn có biết chia sẻ điều gì với những người chưa tin Chúa về ĐCT?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Một vài điều
  - c. Không thực sự biết

### Tham Khảo Ý Kiến # 3

#### Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc-nhân (CĐN) về Đức Chúa Jssus Christ (CJS)

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bạn đã nghe rất nhiều về CJS trước khi trở thành một CĐN?
  - a. Không nghe gì cả
  - b. Một vài lần
  - c. Rất nhiều
2. Làm thế nào mà lần đầu tiên bạn nghe về CJS?
  - a. Từ các tài liệu (Kinh Thánh, sách, đài phát thanh, truyền hình, ..)
  - b. Từ một CĐN khác
  - c. Từ nhà thờ
  - d. Từ một nguồn khác
3. Trước khi trở thành một CĐN, bạn hiểu về CJS như thế nào?
  - a. Ngài là một nhà lãnh đạo tôn giáo nổi tiếng như Đức Phật hoặc Mohammed.
  - b. Ngài là một nhân vật đầy năng quyền trong việc chữa bệnh và dạy dỗ.
  - c. Ngài là một thiên thần giống như thiên sứ.
  - d. Ngài là Thiên Chúa.
  - e. Một quan niệm khác
4. Bạn biết nhiều tín hữu khác trước khi trở thành một CĐN?
  - a. Không
  - b. Một số
  - c. Rất nhiều

5. Bạn có phải là CĐN đầu tiên trong gia đình của bạn không?
  - a. Phải
  - b. Không
6. Nếu không, những CĐN trong gia đình của bạn có chia sẻ với bạn những câu chuyện về CJS không?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Có, một chút
  - c. Không
7. Có bao giờ bạn chia sẻ về CJS với những người khác không?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Có, một chút
  - c. Không
8. Bạn nghĩ vì sao tín hữu Việt Nam không mạnh dạn trong việc chia sẻ Tin Lành cho những người khác?
  - a. Không biết gì để chia sẻ
  - b. Không biết làm thế nào để chia sẻ
  - c. Cảm thấy ngần ngại chia sẻ
  - d. Không có cơ hội để chia sẻ
  - e. Lý do khác

### Tham Khảo Ý Kiến # 4

#### Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc Nhân (CDN) về các Lời Dạy của Đức Chúa Jesus (CJS)

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bạn có biết các sách nào trong Kinh Thánh để đọc về các lời dạy của CJS không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ ràng
  - b. Biết một số
  - c. Không thực sự biết
2. Bạn có biết rõ các lời dạy của CJS về Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ
  - b. Có, khá tốt
  - c. Không, chỉ một ít
  - d. Không thực sự biết
3. Bạn có biết rõ các lời dạy của CJS về việc thực hành đức tin như đọc Kinh Thánh, cầu nguyện, hoặc kiêng ăn không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ
  - b. Có, khá tốt
  - c. Không, chỉ một ít
  - d. Không thực sự biết
4. Bạn có biết rõ các lời dạy của CJS về cách đối xử với những người khác không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ
  - b. Có, khá tốt
  - c. Không, chỉ một ít
  - d. Không thực sự biết

5. Bạn có biết rõ các lời dạy của CJS về Hội Thánh không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ
  - b. Có, khá tốt
  - c. Không, chỉ một ít
  - d. Không thực sự biết
6. Bạn có nghĩ các lời dạy của CJS tương tự như các giáo lý tôn giáo khác không?
  - a. Vâng, gần như giống nhau
  - b. Một số phần giống nhau
  - c. Không, rất nhiều phần khác nhau
7. Bạn có nghĩ rằng cho đến nay bạn thực hành tốt những gì bạn đã học từ những lời dạy của CJS?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Một vài điều
  - c. Hầu như không có
8. Bạn có nghĩ rằng những lời dạy của CJS sẽ hữu ích cho bất cứ ai học đến không?
  - a. Có, chắc chắn
  - b. Tôi không biết
  - c. Không, nó phụ thuộc vào mỗi cá nhân

### Tham Khảo Ý Kiến # 5

#### Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc Nhân về Kiến Thức Thần Học

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bạn có nhiều câu hỏi về niềm tin không?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Có một vài câu hỏi
  - c. Không có câu hỏi
2. Bạn nghĩ mình hiểu rõ về niềm tin Cơ-đốc nói chung không?
  - a. Có, rất rõ
  - b. Có, khá tốt
  - c. Không thực sự biết
3. Bạn có muốn hiểu rõ hơn về lãnh vực thần học không?
  - a. Rất muốn
  - b. Sao cung được
  - c. Không
4. Có nhiều người hỏi bạn về niềm tin không?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Thỉnh thoảng
  - c. Không
5. Bạn nghĩ mình biết câu trả lời nêu được hỏi về niềm tin của bạn không?
  - a. Có
  - b. Có thể
  - c. Không chắc

6. Tại sao người ta không nêu lên những câu hỏi về niềm tin?
  - a. Họ không quan tâm về đời sau.
  - b. Họ không biết ai để hỏi.
  - c. Họ ngại hỏi.
  - d. Một lý do khác
7. Tại sao kiến thức về niềm tin là quan trọng?
  - a. Để biết điều nào là thật hay đúng
  - b. Để không sa ngã niềm tin
  - c. Để giúp người khác tiếp nhận chân lý
  - d. Tất cả các điều trên
8. Bạn nghĩ con người ngày nay quan tâm đến phần tâm linh không?
  - a. Có, rất nhiều
  - b. Không, rất ít
  - c. Có, nhưng họ không biết tìm câu trả lời ở đâu

### Thao Khảo Ý Kiến # 6

#### Quan Điểm của Cơ-đốc Nhân (CĐN) về Hội Thánh (HT)

Chọn một câu trả lời cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo suy nghĩ của riêng bạn.

1. Bạn có biết rõ lịch sử của Hội Thánh không?
  - a. Có, khá tốt
  - b. Chỉ một ít
  - c. Không thực sự biết
2. Bạn có biết làm thế nào Hội Thánh lần đầu tiên được hình thành?
  - a. Có, khá tốt
  - b. Cũng biết chút ít
  - c. Không thực sự biết
3. Bạn biết rõ những sự khác biệt lớn giữa Cơ Đốc Giáo và các tôn giáo khác không?
  - a. Có, khá tốt
  - b. Cũng biết chút ít
  - c. Không thực sự biết
4. Bạn có một kiến thức tốt về cơ cấu của Hội Thánh trên toàn thế giới?
  - a. Có, khá tốt
  - b. Không, chỉ là một chút
  - c. Không thực sự biết
5. Bạn có kiến thức tốt về các mục vụ của Hội Thánh không?
  - a. Có, khá tốt
  - b. Không, chỉ là một chút
  - c. Không thực sự biết

6. Bạn có là một thành viên tích cực của hội thánh địa phương không?

- Có
- Phần nào
- Không hẳn

7. Bạn có biết rõ sự khác biệt hoặc tương đồng căn bản giữa nhà thờ bạn và các nhà thờ khác không?

- Có, rất nhiều
- Có, một số điều
- Không, không hẳn

8. Bạn có biết rõ các mục vụ của hội thánh địa phương không?

- Có, rất rõ
- Có, một số điều
- Không nhiều

**APPENDIX J**

**CÁC BÀI HỌC**

### Bài Học Một: Đức Chúa Trời

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Đức Chúa Trời (ĐCT) là ai? (Sáng 1:1)
  - a. Người đầy năng quyền nhất
  - b. Đáng Tạo Hóa
  - c. Thần đầy năng quyền nhất
  - d. Một trong các vị thần
2. Đức Chúa Trời có tên không? (Xuất 6:2-3)
  - a. Có
  - b. Không
  - c. Không rõ
3. Tên của Đức Chúa Trời là gì? (Xuất 6:2-3)
  - a. Jesus Christ
  - b. Đức Giê-hô-va
  - c. Một tên khác
  - d. Không có tên
4. Làm thế nào Đức Chúa Trời hiện hữu? (Xuất 3:14)
  - a. Từ một vị thần khác
  - b. Từ cha mẹ của ĐCT
  - c. Tự tồn tại
  - d. Không rõ

5. Đức Chúa Trời còn sống không? (Thi 90:2)

- Không, ĐCT đã chết từ lâu.
- Không, ĐCT đã chết từ thế kỷ đầu tiên.
- Còn, ĐCT vẫn còn sống và sống đời đời.

6. Tại sao chúng ta không nhìn thấy Đức Chúa Trời? (Giăng 4:24; Xuất 33:20)

- Bởi vì ĐCT là thần
- Bởi vì ĐCT quá vinh quang
- Bởi vì ĐCT không muốn loài người thấy Ngài
- Cả a và b

7. Đức Chúa Trời biết điều gì? (Thi 11:04)

- Mọi điều đã xảy ra
- Mọi điều đang xảy ra
- Mọi tư tưởng, lời nói, hành động
- Mọi sự trong quá khứ, hiện tại và tương lai

8. Đức Chúa Trời có khả năng làm được điều gì? (Ma-thi-ơ 19:26)

- Tất cả những điều mà con người có thể làm
- ĐCT có khả năng làm được mọi sự
- Có một số điều ĐCT không có khả năng thực hiện

9. Bản tính của Đức Chúa Trời là gì? (Lê-vi 19:2b; Thi 11:7 b, 9:08; 1 Giăng 4:8 b, Giăng 3:16, Giăng 3:33, Thi 89:34, Rô-ma 8:32)

- Thánh thiện, công bình, yêu thương, trung thực, thành tín, tốt lành
- Thay đổi, không hoàn hảo, lanh đạm
- Gian ác, ích kỷ, hận thù

10. Đức Chúa Trời của Cơ Đốc Giáo thật ra là ai? (Sáng 1:1-2, Cô-lô-se 1:12-16)

- a. Đức Chúa Cha
- b. Đức Chúa Jesus
- c. Đức Thánh Linh
- d. Cả ba

11. Khi chúng ta nói rằng chúng ta thờ phượng Đức Chúa Trời, chúng ta thờ phượng ai?

(Ma-thi-ơ 28:19)

- a. Một Thiên Chúa với ba tên
- b. Một Thiên Chúa trong ba cá thể
- c. Ba Chúa riêng biệt

12. Điều nào đúng về Chúa của Cơ Đốc Nhân?

- a. Chúa được biết đến là Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi
- b. Chúa Ba Ngôi đồng hiện hữu từ cõi đời đời và bình đẳng
- c. Chúa Ba Ngôi có cùng bản tính, khả năng, và chương trình
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

13. Làm thế nào để con người biết về sự hiện hữu của Đức Chúa Trời? (Thi 19:01,

139:14; Sáng 1:1, Giăng 1:18; Công 15:12; 1 Phi 2:12)

- a. Qua tôn giáo, truyền thống, mê tín dị đoan
- b. Qua truyền thuyết, sách vở, văn hóa
- c. Qua thiên nhiên, lương tâm con người, Kinh Thánh, Chúa Jesus Christ, phép lạ của ĐCT, Hội Thánh, những cuộc đời được biến đổi bởi Đức Thánh Linh
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

14. Còn có những thần thật khác không? (Ê-sai 43:11)

- a. Có, các thần của những nền văn hóa và tôn giáo khác cũng là thần thật.
- b. Không, không có các thần khác.
- c. Chúng ta không biết.

15. Điểm chính của bài học này là gì?

- a. Để biết rõ hơn ĐCT là ai
- b. Để biết rõ hơn công việc của ĐCT
- c. Để biết làm thế nào để thờ phượng ĐCT đúng cách

### Bài Học Hai: Cuộc Đời của Đức Chúa Jesus

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Đức Chúa Jesus là ai? (Giăng 1:1-3; Giăng 10:30)
  - a. Vua vĩ đại nhất của người Do Thái
  - b. Người sáng lập Cơ Đốc giáo
  - c. Con Đức Chúa Trời, và cũng là Đức Chúa Trời
  - d. Một trong các thiên thần
  - e. Tất cả các điều trên
2. Đức Chúa Jesus hiện hữu bằng cách nào? (John 3:16)
  - a. Tự có
  - b. Được Đức Chúa Cha tạo ra
  - c. Được Đức Chúa Cha sanh ra
  - d. Cha mẹ Chúa Jesus sanh ra
  - e. Không rõ
3. Đức Chúa Jesus có từ khi nào? (Cô-lô-se 1:15-17)
  - a. Trước buổi sáng thế
  - b. Từ thế kỷ thứ nhất
  - c. Một thời điểm khác
4. Đức Chúa Jesus có cha mẹ ruột phân xác không? (Lu-ca 2:4-6, 20)
  - a. Không
  - b. Có cha
  - c. Có mẹ
  - d. Cả cha lẫn mẹ

5. Làm thế nào mà mẹ của Chúa Jesus mang thai Ngài? (Lu-ca 1:34-35)
  - a. Thông qua cây ghép
  - b. Thông qua phương pháp tự nhiên
  - c. Bởi Đức Thánh Linh
  - d. Bằng một cách khác
6. Đức Chúa Jesus được sinh ra trên đất khi nào? (Ma-thi-ơ 2:1)
  - a. Khoảng 4000 năm trước
  - b. Khoảng 2000 năm trước
  - c. Một thời điểm khác
7. Đức Chúa Jesus được sinh ra tại quốc gia nào? (Lu-ca 2:4-7)
  - a. Mỹ
  - b. Y-sơ-ra-ên
  - c. Ai-cập
  - d. Một quốc gia khác
8. Đức Chúa Jesus sống bao nhiêu năm trên trái đất? (Lu-ca 3:23)
  - a. Khoảng 45 năm
  - b. Khoảng 33 năm
  - c. Trong khoảng một thời gian khác
  - d. Không rõ

9. Điều gì không đúng về Đức Chúa Jesus?

- a. Ngài không hề phạm tội
- b. Ngài không có nhu cầu thể xác như một người thường
- c. Ngài biết hết mọi sự
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

10. Công việc quan trọng mà Đức Chúa Jesus đã làm là gì? (Ma-thi-ơ 4:23; 20:18-19)

- a. Giảng dạy
- b. Làm phép lạ
- c. Chết cho nhân loại
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

11. Đức Chúa Jesus có sức mạnh thể xác hơn so với một người bình thường không?

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

12. Đức Chúa Jesus có năng quyền siêu nhiên hơn một người bình thường không?

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

13. Đức Chúa Jesus đã có quyền phép gì chứng tỏ Ngài là Đức Chúa Trời?

- a. Trên bệnh tật
- b. Trên thiên nhiên
- c. Trên ma quỷ
- d. Trên sự chết
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

14. Đức Chúa Jesus đã làm gì mà Ngài được biết đến là Cứu Chúa của nhân loại? (Cô-lô-se 1:20; 1 Ti-mô-thê 1:15)

- a. Chữa lành người bệnh
- b. Mang lại tự do cho người bị áp bức
- c. Chết thay cho tất cả tội nhân
- d. Một điều khác

15. Đức Chúa Jesus chết như thế nào? (Ma-thi-ơ 27:26)

- a. Chết tự nhiên
- b. Bị đóng đinh trên thập tự giá
- c. Bị ám sát
- d. Chết vì một nguyên nhân khác
- e. Không rõ

16. Ai đã giết Đức Chúa Jesus? (Ma-thi-ơ 27:31; Công Vụ 2:23)

- a. Một trong các môn đệ của Ngài
- b. Các nhà lãnh đạo Do Thái đương đại thông qua chính phủ La Mã
- c. Tổng đốc Phi-lát
- d. Không rõ

17. Đức Chúa Jesus có biết trước rằng Ngài sẽ bị giết không? (Mác 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

18. Đức Chúa Jesus có thực sự chết về thể xác không? (Ma-thi-ơ 28:1-20; Mác 16:1-20, Lu-ca 24:1-55, Giăng 20:1-21)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

19. Đức Chúa Jesus có sống lại từ cõi chết không? (Công Vụ 1:1-3)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

20. Đức Chúa Jesus đã sống lại từ cõi chết khi nào? (Lu-ca 24:7)

- a. Vào ngày thứ ba sau khi chết
- b. Ba ngày sau khi chết
- c. Sau một khoảng thời gian khác
- d. Không rõ

21. Có ai thấy Đức Chúa Jesus sống lại không? (Ma-thi-ơ 28; Mác 16, Lu-ca 24, Giăng 20; 1 Cô-rinh-tô 15:06)

- a. Không ai cả
- b. Mẹ của Ngài
- c. Mười hai môn đệ
- d. Hơn 500 người

22. Sau khi Đức Chúa Jesus sống lại, người ta gặp Ngài bao nhiêu lần? (1 Cô. 15:4-8)

- a. Một lần
- b. Hai lần
- c. Nhiều lần

23. Sau khi sống lại, Đức Chúa Jesus ở trên đất bao lâu? (Công Vụ 1:3)

- a. Mười ngày
- b. Bốn mươi ngày
- c. Trong một khoảng thời gian khác
- d. Không rõ

24. Điều gì đã xảy ra với Đức Chúa Jesus sau khi sống lại? (Công Vụ 1:9)

- a. Chết một lần nữa
- b. Thăng thiên
- c. Biến mất
- d. Không rõ

25. Đức Chúa Jesus có chương trình trở lại thế giới này không? (Giăng 14:2-3; Ma-thi-ơ 24:30-31)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

26. Trong thời gian sống như một con người, Đức Chúa Jesus có biết khi nào Ngài sẽ trở lại trái đất này không? (Ma-thi-ơ 24:36)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Không rõ

27. Tại sao Chúa Jesus trở lại trái đất này? (Giăng 14:3; Khải 19:19-21)

- a. Không được biết rõ
- b. Tiêu diệt tất cả các thế lực tối tăm
- c. Đem tất cả các tín hữu về thiên đàng
- d. Cá hai b và c

28. Những điểm chính của bài học này là gì?

- a. Học biết Đức Chúa Jesus Christ là ai
- b. Học biết Đức Chúa Jesus Christ dạy điều gì
- c. Học biết những điều kỳ lạ mà Đức Chúa Jesus Christ đã làm

### Bài Học Ba: Các Lời Dạy của Đức Chúa Jesus

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về Đức Chúa Cha? (Giăng 3:16, Mác 12:29-30)
  - a. Đức Chúa Cha đã sai Chúa Jesus đến thế gian để cứu thế giới khỏi sự chết đói đói.
  - b. Chúng ta phải yêu mến Đức Chúa Trời với tất cả trái tim, tâm hồn, tâm trí, và sức mạnh.
  - c. Đức Chúa Cha là thần cao quý nhất trong các thần.
  - d. Cả hai a và b
  - e. Cả ba a-c
2. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về Đức Thánh Linh? (Giăng 14:26)
  - a. Đức Thánh Linh là linh hồn của Đức Chúa Trời.
  - b. Đức Thánh Linh ngự trong đời sống của các tín hữu.
  - c. Đức Thánh Linh hướng dẫn, yên ủi, thêm sức, và giúp các tín hữu.
  - d. Cả hai b và c
  - e. Cả ba a-c
3. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về chính Ngài? (Mác 10:45; Giăng 5:22, 14:3, 16:28)
  - a. Ngài đến từ trên trời.
  - b. Ngài chết thay cho nhân loại.
  - c. Ngài sẽ trở lại trái đất này.
  - d. Ngài sẽ phán xét tất cả mọi người trong ngày Đoán Xét.
  - e. Tất cả các điều trên

4. Chúa Jesus đã tuyên bố điều gì về chính Ngài? (Ma-thi-ơ 16:27; Giăng 3:16, 10:30, 14:6)

- Ngài là Con Một của Đức Chúa Trời.
- Ngài là Con Người.
- Ngài là con đường duy nhất để đến thiên đàng.
- Ngài là Đức Chúa Trời.
- Tất cả các điều trên

5. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về cha mẹ? (Mác 10:19)

- Tôn trọng, yêu thương và chăm sóc của họ
- Sống suốt đời với họ
- Tôn thờ họ khi họ chết
- Chu cấp tiền bạc cho họ đầy đủ

6. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về hôn nhân?

- Tự do kết hôn không phân biệt giới tính
- Tự do kết hôn không phân biệt tuổi tác
- Tự do kết hôn không phân biệt tôn giáo
- Tất cả các điều trên đều không đúng

7. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về ly hôn? (Ma-thi-ơ 5:32)

- Tự do ly hôn
- Ly hôn khi không thể giải hòa
- Ly hôn chỉ khi có ngoại tình
- Ly hôn là chấp nhận miễn là hợp pháp với luật dân sự

8. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về kẻ thù? (Ma-thi-ơ 5:44)

- a. Tránh xa họ
- b. Đối xử với họ như cách họ đối xử với mình
- c. Yêu thương họ
- d. Làm theo tiếng nói trái tim mình

9. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về tiền bạc? (Ma-thi-ơ 19:33)

- a. Cố gắng kiếm tiền trong mọi cơ hội có được
- b. Tiền có thể là một trở ngại lớn cho những người giàu để có sự sống đời đời.
- c. Giàu có là một phước mà Đức Chúa Trời luôn ban cho người tin Ngài.
- d. Cả hai b và c

10. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về các thánh lễ? (Ma-thi-ơ 28:19 ; Lu-ca 22:19)

- a. Làm phép báp-tem cho các tín hữu trong danh của Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi
- b. Giữ Tiệc Thánh
- c. Giữ tất cả các thánh lễ được xác định bởi các nhà lãnh đạo của giáo hội
- d. Liên hoan lễ Phục sinh và Giáng sinh
- e. Cả hai a và b
- f. Tất cả a-d

11. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự thờ phượng? (Giăng 4:23)

- a. Thờ phượng trong Đức Thánh Linh và trong lẽ thật
- b. Thờ phượng cách trang nghiêm với hội chúng
- c. Đó là một tội nếu bỏ qua việc đi nhà thờ vì bất kỳ lý do gì.
- d. Cả hai a và b

12. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự cầu nguyện? (Lu-ca 18:1; Giăng 14:13-14 ; Ma-thi-ơ 21:22)

- a. Cầu nguyện kiên trì và chân thành
- b. Cầu nguyện với đức tin trong danh Chúa Jēsus
- c. Cầu nguyện phải đi đôi với kiêng ăn
- d. Cả a và b
- e. Cả ba a-c

13. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự kiêng ăn? (Ma-thi-ơ 6:16-18)

- a. Đừng khoe khoang về sự kiêng ăn
- b. Kiêng ăn thường kỳ
- c. Kiêng ăn là một hành động tự nguyện
- d. Kiêng ăn khi muốn lời cầu nguyện của mình được nhậm

14. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự tận chung của thế giới? (Ma-thi-ơ 24:10-30)

- a. Nó sẽ không bao giờ xảy ra
- b. Nó sẽ thật sự xảy ra
- c. Nó đã xảy ra trong phương diện tâm linh

15. Chúa Jesus đã dạy về thiên đàng? (Giăng 14:1-3)

- a. Là nhà của Đức Chúa Trời, nơi mà các tín hữu sẽ sống sau khi chết
- b. Là một thế giới mới trên trái đất này sau khi Chúa Jesus đến lần thứ hai
- c. Là một thế giới tâm linh, nơi mà các tín hữu sẽ cảm thấy hạnh phúc

16. Theo Chúa Jesus, hai điều răn lớn nhất là gì? (Ma-thi-ơ 22:37-39)

- a. Yêu mến Đức Chúa Trời với tất cả trái tim, tâm trí, linh hồn và sức mạnh và yêu người khác như chính mình
- b. Thờ phượng Đức Chúa Trời và không phạm tội
- c. Sống tốt và và kiêng ăn thường xuyên
- d. Làm từ thiện và chia sẻ Tin Lành

17. Mạng lệnh cuối cùng của Chúa Jesus cho môn đồ của Ngài là gì? (Ma-thi-ơ 28:19-20)

- a. Yêu mến lẫn nhau
- b. Đào tạo môn đồ khắp thế giới
- c. Trung tín cho đến chết
- d. Đầy dẫy Đức Thánh Linh

18. Điểm chính của bài học này là gì?

- a. Niềm tin của Cơ Đốc Nhân về Chúa Jesus Christ
- b. Các giáo huấn của Chúa Jesus về các chủ đề quan trọng
- c. Các công việc của Đức Chúa Jesus
- d. Các câu chuyện nổi tiếng trong Kinh Thánh

### Bài Học Bốn: Những Câu Hỏi Khó Về Niềm Tin

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Vũ trụ, mọi loài động thực vật trên trái đất, và con người đâu tiên từ đâu mà có?  
(Sáng 1)
  - a. Tự có
  - b. Là kết quả của thiên nhiên
  - c. Đức Chúa Trời tạo dựng
  - d. Những thần nào khác tạo ra
2. Tại sao con người chết? (Sáng 2:16-17)
  - a. Vì thân xác con người không thể tồn tại đời đời
  - b. Vì con người phạm tội với Chúa
  - c. Vì con người không muốn sống đời đời
  - d. Vì một hay nhiều lý do khác
3. Điều gì xảy ra ngay sau khi con người chết? (Hê 9:27)
  - a. Chấm dứt; không còn gì nữa
  - b. Lập tức sống đời kế tiếp trên đất này
  - c. Ở một chỗ tạm không thuộc thế giới này chờ ngày phán xét sau cùng
  - d. Bắt đầu sống đời đời ở thiên đàng hay hỏa ngục
4. Con người có mấy đời? (Hê 9:27-28)
  - a. Một: đời này
  - b. Hai: đời này và đời vĩnh cửu sau đời này
  - c. Nhiều đời: nhiều đời trước, đời này, và nhiều đời sau
  - d. Khác nhau tùy theo niềm tin hoặc cách sống của mỗi người

5. Ai quyết định số phận của con người ở đời sau? (2 Ti. 4:1)

- Không ai quyết định cả vì không có đời sau.
- Không ai quyết định cả. Hòn người tự nhiên biến hóa qua đời mới.
- Đức Chúa Jesus quyết định.
- Người theo đạo nào thì thần của đạo đó quyết định.

6. Số phận con người trong đời sau dựa vào điều gì trong đời này? (Giăng 3:16)

- Việc làm của con người
- Tâm lòng của con người
- Cách sống của con người
- Niềm tin của con người vào Chân Thần
- Tất cả các điều trên

7. Ai vừa là Chúa Trời vừa là người khi sống trên trái đất? (Giăng 1:1&11a)

- Không có ai cả
- Những nhân vật được loài người tôn thờ như Chúa Jesus, Phật Thích Ca, Mohammed
- Nhiều thánh thần khác
- Chỉ có Đức Chúa Jesus

8. Tại sao Đức Chúa Jesus phải chết cho nhân loại? (Rô-ma 3:23, 6:23; Hê-bo-ro 9:22)

- Vì mọi người đều phạm tội
- Vì hậu quả của tội lỗi là sự chết
- Vì không ai có thể cứu chính mình hoặc người khác
- Tất cả các điều trên

9. Làm sao tội nhân được cứu bởi Chúa Jesus? (Rô-ma 10:9)

- a. Tin rằng Chúa Jesus là Đức Chúa Trời
- b. Ngừng làm những điều sai trái
- c. Làm một tín hữu nồng nàn
- d. Qua lời nói, xưng nhận rằng chúng ta có tội, tin rằng Chúa Jesus chết cho chúng ta, và trung thành thờ phượng Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi.
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

10. Các tín hữu sẽ có những điều gì mà người không tin Chúa không có? (Thi Thiên 128:1-5; Giăng 3:36; Rô-ma 6:4)

- a. Thêm phước lành trong đời này
- b. Tâm linh đổi mới
- c. Sự sống đời đời nơi thiên đàng
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

11. Tất cả những người sinh ra trước thời của Chúa Jesus được ở thiên đàng không?  
(Truyền Đạo 11:9)

- a. Đúng, tất cả được ở thiên đàng.
- b. Không, chỉ có những người làm lành lánh dữ.
- c. Không, không ai cả.
- d. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

12. Sau khi Chúa Jesus giáng sinh, vẫn có những người chưa bao giờ nghe đến sự cứu rỗi của Chúa Jesus, và họ không tin có Chúa Trời. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Rô-ma 1:19-20)

- a. Có, tất cả được.
- b. Không, không ai cả.
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

13. Sau khi Chúa Jesus giáng sinh, vẫn có những người chưa bao giờ nghe đến sự cứu rỗi qua Chúa Jesus, nhưng họ tin có Chúa Trời. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Truyền 11:9)

- a. Có, tất cả được.
- b. Không, không ai cả.
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

14. Có những người không biết Chúa Jesus, tin và thờ Đức-Chúa Trời và các thần khác nữa. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Xuất 20:2-5)

- a. Có, tất cả được.
- b. Không, không ai cả.
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

15. Có những người nghe đến sự cứu rỗi qua Chúa Jesus nhưng không tin Ngài, dù họ tin và thờ Đức Chúa Trời. Họ có được ở thiên đàng không? (Giăng 1:10-12; 8:24)

- a. Có, tất cả được.
- b. Có một số được.
- c. Không, không ai cả.
- d. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

16. Có những người sống một cuộc sống đạo đức trong đời này và không tin thờ ai cả, họ có được sự sống đời đời trên thiên đàng không? (Rô-ma 3:20; Giăng 14:6)

- Có, tất cả được.
- Có thể một số người được.
- Không ai cả.
- Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

17. Đối với những thai nhi, trẻ em sóm qua đời, hay những người bị bệnh tâm thần, có ai trong những người này được ở thiên đàng không?

- Có, tất cả.
- Không, không ai cả.
- Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định.

18. Sau cõi đời này, con người còn cơ hội nào để chuyển đổi niềm tin không? (Hê. 10:26-27)

- Không
- Có thể còn
- Chắc chắn còn

19. Điểm chính của bài học này là gì?

- Niềm tin Cơ Đốc về sự sống đời đời
- Chương trình cứu rỗi của Đức Chúa Trời qua Chúa Jesus
- Niềm tin về ngày tận thế

### Bài Học Năm: Hội Thánh

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Hội Thánh là gì?
  - a. Nơi tín hữu thờ phượng Chúa
  - b. Nhóm tín hữu cùng nhau thờ phượng Chúa
  - c. Hội viên của tất cả các hội thánh trên thế giới
  - d. Cộng đồng tín hữu của mọi thời đại
2. Có tất cả bao nhiêu hội thánh Cơ Đốc?
  - a. Chỉ một Hội thánh toàn cầu
  - b. Ba Hội Thánh chánh
  - c. Nhiều hội thánh khác nhau
3. Tên chính thức của Hội Thánh Cơ Đốc là gì?
  - a. Hội Thánh Đáng Christ
  - b. Hội Thánh Giám Lý
  - c. Một tên khác
  - d. Không có tên chính thức
4. Hội Thánh được hình thành ở đâu?
  - a. Tại Israel
  - b. Tại Hoa Kỳ
  - c. Tại một quốc gia khác

5. Hội Thánh được hình thành khi nào?
  - a. Từ thời sáng thế
  - b. Trong thế kỷ đầu tiên
  - c. Trong thế kỷ thứ tư
  - d. Ở một thời điểm khác
6. Tôn giáo của Hội Thánh là gì?
  - a. Công Giáo
  - b. Cơ Đốc Giáo
  - c. Tin Lành
  - d. Chánh Thống Giáo
7. Các giáo hội chính của Cơ Đốc Giáo là gì?
  - a. Công Giáo và Tin Lành
  - b. Công Giáo và Chánh thống Giáo
  - c. Công Giáo, Chánh Thống Giáo, và Tin lành
  - d. Câu trả lời c và nhiều nhóm nữa
8. Hội thánh địa phương của chúng ta thuộc giáo hội nào?
  - a. Công Giáo
  - b. Chánh thống Giáo
  - c. Tin lành
9. Giáo Hội Tin Lành được hình thành khi nào?
  - a. Trong thế kỷ đầu tiên
  - b. Trong thế kỷ thứ tư
  - c. Trong thế kỷ 16

10. Giáo Hội Tin Lành được khởi xướng ở đâu?

- a. Vùng Trung Đông
- b. Châu Âu
- c. Bắc Mỹ
- d. Một vùng khác

11. Lý do chính mà Giáo Hội Tin Lành được hình thành?

- a. Kết quả của một chương trình nhóm phục hưng
- b. Tranh chấp về quyền hành lãnh đạo trong hội thánh
- c. Khác biệt về một số tín lý thần học đối lập với niềm tin của Công Giáo
- d. Một lý do khác

12. Có phải tất cả Cơ Đốc Nhân có cùng các thánh lễ không?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, mỗi giáo hội có các thánh lễ khác nhau
- c. Không, mỗi hội thánh địa phương có các thánh lễ khác nhau

13. Có phải tất cả Cơ Đốc Nhân có cùng một cuốn Kinh Thánh?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, nhưng mỗi giáo hội có cùng một cuốn Kinh Thánh
- c. Không, mỗi hội thánh địa phương tự chọn loại Kinh Thánh cho mình

14. Có phải tất cả Cơ Đốc Nhân có cùng một người hay một ban lãnh đạo cao nhất không?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, mỗi giáo hội có ban lãnh đạo độc lập
- c. Không, mỗi hội thánh địa phương có ban lãnh đạo độc lập

15. Có phải tất cả các tín hữu Giáo Hội Tin Lành có một người lãnh đạo cao nhất không?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, nhưng có ban lãnh đạo cao nhất
- c. Giáo Hội Tin Lành không có người hay ban lãnh đạo chung

16. Có phải Giáo Hội Tin Lành có nhiều giáo phái hoạt động độc lập không?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, có nhiều giáo phái nhưng làm việc chung với nhau
- c. Không, có nhiều tên nhưng dưới một lãnh đạo liên hiệp

17. Hội Thánh địa phương của chúng ta thuộc giáo phái nào?

- a. Hội Thánh Đáng Christ
- b. Hội Thánh Tin Lành Bắc Mỹ
- c. Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam
- d. Một giáo phái khác

18. Những thực hành đức tin căn bản của Cơ Đốc Nhân là gì?

- a. Thờ phượng chung hằng tuần, đọc Kinh Thánh và cầu nguyện hằng ngày
- b. Kiêng ăn thường kỳ và bố thí thường xuyên
- c. a và b
- d. Mỗi giáo hội mỗi khác

19. Nhiệm vụ quan trọng nhất mà Đức Chúa Jesus ban truyền cho Hội Thánh thực hiện là gì?

- a. Yêu Chúa và yêu người
- b. Đào tạo môn đồ khắp thế giới
- c. Trung tín với Chúa
- d. Làm việc thiện và tránh điều ác

20. Điểm chính của bài học này là gì?

- a. Học các chủ đề chính trong Kinh Thánh
- b. Nâng cao hiểu biết chung về Hội Thánh
- c. Học về các mục vụ của Hội Thánh

**APPENDIX K**  
**BÀI TẬP CUỐI KHÓA**

## BÀI TẬP CUỐI KHÓA

Hoàn thành những việc sau đây trong vòng hai tuần tới.

1. Đọc sách Mác
2. Cầu nguyện ít nhất 15 phút mỗi ngày
3. Cầu nguyện cho một người mà bạn muốn chia sẻ niềm tin của mình đến họ
4. Chia sẻ niềm tin của mình cho người bạn mình đã cầu nguyện cho
5. Ôn lại các bài học cho bài kiểm tra cuối khóa

**APPENDIX L**  
**BÀI KIỂM TRA CUỐI KHÓA**

## BÀI KIỂM TRA CUỐI KHÓA

Chọn câu trả lời đúng nhất cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây.

1. Đức Chúa Trời là ai? (Sáng 1:1)
  - a. Người đầy năng quyền nhất
  - b. Đấng Tạo Hóa
  - c. Thần đầy năng quyền nhất
  - d. Một trong các vị thần
2. Làm thế nào Đức Chúa Trời hiện hữu? (Xuất 3:14)
  - a. Từ một vị thần khác
  - b. Từ cha mẹ của ĐCT
  - c. Tự tồn tại
  - d. Không rõ
3. Tại sao chúng ta không nhìn thấy Đức Chúa Trời? (Giăng 4:24; Xuất 33:20)
  - a. Bởi vì ĐCT là thần
  - b. Bởi vì ĐCT quá vinh quang
  - c. Bởi vì ĐCT không muốn gặp con người
  - d. Cả a và b

4. Làm thế nào để con người biết về sự hiện hữu của Đức Chúa Trời? (Thi 19:01, 139:14; Sáng 1:1, Giăng 1:18; Công 15:12; 1 Phi 2:12)

- Qua tôn giáo, truyền thông
- Qua truyền thuyết, sách vở, văn hóa
- Qua thiên nhiên, lương tâm con người, Kinh Thánh, Chúa Jesus Christ, phép lạ của ĐCT, Hội Thánh, những cuộc đời được biến đổi bởi Đức Thánh Linh
- Tất cả các điều trên

5. Khi chúng ta nói rằng chúng ta thờ phượng Đức Chúa Trời, chúng ta thờ phượng ai? (Ma-thi-ơ 28:19)

- Một Thiên Chúa với ba tên
- Một Thiên Chúa trong ba cá thể
- Ba Chúa riêng biệt

6. Tên của Đức Chúa Trời là gì? (Xuất 6:2-3)

- Jesus Christ
- Đức Giê-hô-va
- Một tên khác
- Không có tên

7. Đức Thánh Linh là ai? (Giăng 14:26)

- Đức Thánh Linh là linh hồn của Đức Chúa Trời.
- Đức Thánh Linh ngự trong đời sống của các tín hữu.
- Đức Thánh Linh hướng dẫn, yên ủi, thêm sức, và giúp các tín hữu.
- Cả hai b và c
- Cả ba a-c

8. Đức Chúa Jesus là ai? (Giăng 1:1-3; Giăng 10:30)

- a. Vua vĩ đại nhất của người Do Thái
- b. Người sáng lập đạo Cơ Đốc giáo
- c. Con Đức Chúa Trời, và là Đức Chúa Trời
- d. Một thần từ trời
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

9. Đức Chúa Jesus hiện hữu bằng cách nào? (John 3:16)

- a. Tự có
- b. Được Đức Chúa Cha tạo ra
- c. Được Đức Chúa Cha sanh ra
- d. Cha mẹ Chúa Jesus sanh ra
- e. Không rõ

10. Đức Chúa Jesus có từ khi nào? (Cô-lô-se 1:15-17)

- a. Trước buổi sáng thế
- b. Từ thế kỷ thứ nhất
- c. Một thời điểm khác

11. Đức Chúa Jesus đã thực hiện quyền phép gì chứng tỏ Ngài là Đức Chúa Trời?

- a. Trên bệnh tật
- b. Trên thiên nhiên
- c. Trên ma quỷ
- d. Trên sự chết
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

12. Đức Chúa Jesus đã làm gì mà Ngài được biết đến là Cứu Chúa của nhân loại? (Cô-lô-se 1:20; 1 Ti-mô-thê 1:15)

- a. Chữa lành người bệnh
- b. Mang lại tự do cho người bị áp bức
- c. Chết thay cho tất cả tội nhân
- d. Một điều khác

13. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về chính Ngài? (Mác 10:45; Giăng 5:22, 14:3, 16:28)

- a. Ngài đến từ trên trời.
- b. Ngài chết thay cho nhân loại.
- c. Ngài sẽ trở lại trái đất này.
- d. Ngài sẽ phán xét tất cả mọi người trong ngày Đoán Xét.
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

14. Chúa Jesus đã tuyên bố điều gì về chính Ngài? (Ma-thi-ơ 16:27; Giăng 3:16, 10:30, 14:6)

- a. Ngài là Con Một của Đức Chúa Trời.
- b. Ngài là Con Người.
- c. Ngài là con đường duy nhất để đến thiên đàng.
- d. Ngài là đầu tiên và cuối cùng.
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

15. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về ly hôn? (Ma-thi-ơ 5:32)

- a. Tự do ly hôn
- b. Ly hôn khi không thể giải hòa
- c. Ly hôn chỉ khi có ngoại tình
- d. Ly hôn là chấp nhận miễn là hợp pháp với luật dân sự

16. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về tiền bạc? (Ma-thi-ơ 19:33)

- a. Cố gắng kiếm tiền trong mọi cơ hội có được
- b. Tiền có thể là một trở ngại lớn cho những người giàu để có sự sống đời đời.
- c. Giàu có là một phước mà Đức Chúa Trời luôn ban cho người tin Ngài.
- d. Cả hai b và c

17. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự thờ phượng? (Giăng 4:23)

- a. Thờ phượng trong Đức Thánh Linh và trong lẽ thật
- b. Thờ phượng cách trang nghiêm với hội chúng
- c. Đó là một tội nếu bỏ qua việc đi nhà thờ vì bất kỳ lý do gì.
- d. Cả hai a và b

18. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự cầu nguyện? ? (Lu-ca 18:1; Giăng 14:13-14 ; Ma-thi-ơ 21:22)

- a. Cầu nguyện kiên trì và chân thành
- b. Cầu nguyện với đức tin trong danh Chúa Jêsus
- c. Kiêng ăn phải đi đôi với cầu nguyện
- d. Cả a và b
- e. Cả ba a-c

19. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự kiêng ăn? (Ma-thi-ơ 6:16-18)

- a. Đừng khoe khoang về sự kiêng ăn
- b. Kiêng ăn thường kỳ
- c. Kiêng ăn là một hành động tự nguyện
- d. Kiêng ăn khi muốn lời cầu nguyện được nhậm

20. Chúa Jesus đã dạy gì về sự tận chung của thế giới? (Ma-thi-ơ 24:10-30)

- a. Nó sẽ không bao giờ xảy ra
- b. Nó sẽ thật sự xảy ra
- c. Nó đã xảy ra trong phương diện tâm linh

21. Tại sao con người chết? (Sáng 2:16-17)

- a. Vì thân xác con người không thể hoạt động đời đời
- b. Vì con người phạm tội với Chúa
- c. Vì con người không muốn sống đời đời
- d. Vì một hay nhiều lý do khác

22. Điều gì xảy ra ngay sau khi con người chết? (Hê 9:27)

- a. Chấm dứt; không còn gì nữa
- b. Lập tức sống đời kế tiếp trên đất này
- c. Ở một chỗ tạm không thuộc thế giới này chờ ngày phán xét sau cùng
- d. Sống đời đời ở thiên đàng hay hỏa ngục

23. Con người có mấy đời? (Hê 9:27-28)

- a. Một: đời này
- b. Hai: đời này và đời vĩnh cữu sau đời này
- c. Nhiều đời: nhiều đời trước, đời này, và nhiều đời sau
- d. Mỗi người khác nhau tùy theo niềm tin hoặc cách sống

24. Số phận con người trong đời sau dựa vào điều gì trong đời này? (Giăng 3:16)

- a. Việc làm của con người
- b. Tâm lòng của con người
- c. Cách sống của con người
- d. Niềm tin của con người vào Chân Thần
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

25. Làm sao tội nhân được cứu bởi Chúa Jesus? (Rô-ma 10:9)

- a. Tin rằng Chúa Jesus là Đức Chúa Trời
- b. Ngừng làm những điều sai trái
- c. Làm một tín hữu nồng nỗi
- d. Qua lời nói, xưng nhận rằng chúng ta có tội, tin rằng Chúa Jesus chết cho chúng ta, và trung thành thờ phượng Đức Chúa Trời Ba Ngôi.
- e. Tất cả các điều trên

26. Các tín hữu sẽ có những điều gì mà người không tin Chúa không có? (Thi Thiên

128:1-5; Giăng 3:36; Rô-ma 6:4)

- a. Thêm phước lành trong đời này
- b. Tâm linh đổi mới
- c. Sự sống đời đời nơi thiên đàng
- d. Tất cả các điều trên

27. Sau khi Chúa Jesus giáng sinh, vẫn có những người chưa bao giờ nghe đến sự cứu rỗi qua Chúa Jesus, và họ không tin có Chúa Trời. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Rô-ma 1:19-20)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định

28. Sau khi Chúa Jesus giáng sinh, vẫn có những người chưa bao giờ nghe đến sự cứu rỗi qua Chúa Jesus, nhưng họ tin có Chúa Trời. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Truyền 11:9)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định

29. Có những người không biết Chúa Jesus, tin và thờ Đức-Chúa Trời và các thần khác nữa. Họ được ở thiên đàng không?

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định

30. Có những người nghe đến sự cứu rỗi qua Chúa Jesus nhưng không tin Ngài, dù họ tin và thờ Đức Chúa Trời. Họ được ở thiên đàng không? (Xuất 20:2-5)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Đức Chúa Jesus sẽ quyết định

31. Có những người sống một cuộc sống đạo đức trong đời này, nghe về Chúa Jesus nhưng không tin nhận Ngài là Đáng Cứu Thé, cũng không thờ ai cả, họ được sự sống đời đời trên thiên đàng không? (Giăng 14:6)

- a. Có
- b. Không
- c. Có thể

32. Sau cõi đời này, con người còn cơ hội nào để chuyển đổi niềm tin không? (Hê 10:26-27)

- a. Không
- b. Có thể còn
- c. Chắc chắn còn

33. Có tất cả bao nhiêu hội thánh Cơ Đốc?

- a. Chỉ một Hội thánh toàn cầu
- b. Ba Hội Thánh chánh
- c. Nhiều hội thánh khác nhau

34. Tên chung của Hội Thánh Cơ Đốc là gì?

- a. Hội Thánh Đáng Christ
- b. Hội Thánh Giám Lý
- c. Một tên khác
- d. Không có tên chính thức

35. Tôn giáo của Hội Thánh Cơ Đốc là gì?

- a. Công Giáo
- b. Cơ Đốc Giáo
- c. Tin Lành
- d. Chánh Thông Giáo

36. Lý do chính mà Giáo Hội Tin Lành được hình thành?

- a. Kết quả của một chương trình nhóm phục hưng
- b. Tranh chấp về quyền hành lãnh đạo trong hội thánh
- c. Khác biệt về một số tín lý với Giáo Hội Công Giáo
- d. Một lý do khác

37. Có phải tất cả Cơ Đốc Nhân có cùng một cuốn Kinh Thánh?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, nhưng mỗi giáo hội có cùng một cuốn Kinh Thánh
- c. Không, mỗi hội thánh địa phương tự chọn loại Kinh Thánh cho mình

38. Có phải Giáo Hội Tin Lành có nhiều hệ phái hoạt động độc lập không?

- a. Phải
- b. Không, có nhiều hệ phái nhưng làm việc chung với nhau
- c. Không, có nhiều tên nhưng chỉ có một lãnh đạo chung

39. Hội Thánh địa phương của chúng ta thuộc hệ phái nào?

- a. Hội Thánh Đáng Christ
- b. Hội Thánh Tin Lành Bắc Mỹ
- c. Hội Thánh Tin Lành Việt Nam
- d. Một hệ phái khác

40. Mạng lệnh quan trọng mà Đức Chúa Jesus ban truyền cho Hội Thánh thực hiện là gì?

- a. Kính Chúa, yêu người
- b. Đào tạo môn đồ khắp thế giới
- c. Trung tín với Chúa
- d. Làm lành lánh dữ

**APPENDIX M**  
**CÁC BẢNG ĐÁNH GIÁ**

### **Tự Đánh Giá**

Xin đánh giá cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo thang điểm từ 1-10.

1 là rất không đồng ý; 10 là rất đồng ý.

1. Bạn đã đọc toàn bộ sách Mác trong vòng hai tuần qua?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Bạn có cầu nguyện 15 phút mỗi ngày trong vòng hai tuần qua?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

3. Bạn có cầu nguyện cho người mà bạn muốn làm chứng về Chúa?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

4. Bạn có làm chứng cho người mà bạn đã cầu nguyện?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

5. Bạn có dành thì giờ để ôn lại các bài học?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

### Đánh Giá Về Lớp Học

Qua chương trình học, xin đánh giá cho mỗi câu hỏi dưới đây theo thang điểm từ 1-10.

1 là rất không đồng ý; 10 là rất đồng ý.

1. Bạn có được nâng cao kiến thức về Đức Chúa Jesus Christ không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

2. Bạn có được nâng cao kiến thức về trách nhiệm của Cơ Đốc Nhân không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

3. Bạn có tìm được giải đáp cho một số thắc mắc về thần học của bạn?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

4. Đức tin của bạn nơi Chúa có được tăng trưởng không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

5. Bạn có mối quan hệ tốt đẹp hơn với Chúa không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

6. Bạn có ước muốn phục vụ Chúa mạnh mẽ hơn qua hội thánh không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

7. Bạn có mong muốn làm chứng về Chúa nhiều hơn không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

8. Bạn có nghĩ chương trình học này quá dài hay khó cho tân tín hữu?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

9. Bạn có nghĩ rằng mỗi tín hữu nên học qua chương trình này không?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

10. Nhìn chung, bạn có nghĩ rằng chương trình học này hữu ích cho bạn?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

**APPENDIX N**

**ĐÁP ÁN**

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Một**

1. b	2. a	3. b	4. c	5. c
6. d	7. d	8. b	9. a	10. d
11. b	12. d	13. c	14. b	15. a

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Hai**

1. c	2. c	3. a	4. c	5. c
6. b	7. b	8. b	9. b	10. d
11. b	12. a	13. e	14. c	15. b
16. b	17. a	18. a	19. a	20. a
21. d	22. c	23. b	24. b	25. a
26. b	27. d	28. a		

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Ba**

1. d	2. d	3. e	4. e	5. a
6. d	7. c	8. c	9. b	10. e
11. a	12. d	13. a	14. b	15. a
16. a	17. b	18. b		

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Bốn**

1. c	2. b	3. c	4. b	5. c
6. d	7. d	8. d	9. d	10. d
11. d	12. b	13. c	14. c	15. c
16. c	17. c	18. a	19. a	

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Năm**

1. d	2. a	3. d	4. a	5. b
6. b	7. c	8. c	9. c	10. b
11. c	12. b	13. b	14. b	15. c
16. a	17. d	18. a	19. b	20. b

**Đáp Án Bài Kiểm Tra Cuối Khóa**

1. b	2. c	3. d	4. c	5. b
6. b	7. d	8. c	9. c	10. a
11. e	12. c	13. e	14. e	15. c
16. b	17. a	18. d	19. a	20. b
21. b	22. c	23. b	24. d	25. d
26. d	27. b	28. c	29. c	30. b
31. b	32. a	33. a	34. d	35. b
36. c	37. b	38. a	39. d	40. b

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